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PLUS
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FANTASTIC FOUR

ANIMATED ANTICS
WITH
Tom & Jerry

WARREN
PUBLISHING
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LOOKING BACK ON THE
GOLDEN AGE OF
QUALITY COMICS

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Is the leading magazine devoted to comic books. Every month Comics Feature brings you the latest news, the most insightful columns and the most revealing interviews from the world of comic books, comic strips, animation and art. From the bountiful archives of yesteryear come articles on classic comic strips and the comic books of the Golden Age; from the present come looks at and talks with the most important men and women in the industry; and from the misty realm of tomorrow come speculative columns, insightful predictions and revealing previews of the comics of the future.

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NMP

COMICS FEATURE

Number 27
January-February 1984

columns

4
EDITORIAL
Greetings and Information from the Publisher.
by Hal Schuster

10
STRIP TEASE
SCORCHY SMITH
The strip that fame forgot.
by Keith Gebers

13
GUD BOOX
WARREN: RIP
An examination of what was once the leading magazines of Black and White graphic storytelling.
by Steve Bissette

40
HEROES
THE FANTASTIC FOUR
The FF became the paramount superhero team in comics. They were the trend-setters for story, art and characters.
by James Van Hise

44
Looking Back On The
GOLDEN AGE
The Quality Gang, Part 1
With some of the top writers and artists in the field, Quality produced both action and comedy stories. The results are worth looking at.
by Ron Goulart

FEATURES

19
JOHN BYRNE
Anatomy of a Phenomenon:
An Interview with perhaps the biggest name in comics today. His work on the X-Men and the Fantastic Four is considered some of the best and easily some of the most popular. An in-depth Interview with eight pages of color.

50
ANIMATED ANTICS
Tom and Jerry
Idi Amin's favorite cartoons.
by James Van Hise

53
NOTES
THE TRIUMPH OF COMIC FANDOM
Their dreams came true, but at what cost to the comics industry?
by Sam Kujava

ON THE COVER:
The Fantastic Four in their latest costumes. This picture is taken from the drawing submitted to Jim Shooter by John Byrne when he first suggested the FF costume change. For a look at the complete picture with word balloons, see page 19. We are grateful to Mr. Byrne for the use of the picture. Artwork ©1983 John Byrne
Characters ©1983 Marvel Comics

Tom and Jerry are © 1983 MGM Darth Vader and Star Wars are © 1983 Lucasfilms. Doll Man ©1983 DC Comics.

departments

5
NEWS
All the latest news in the comic industry.

57
COMICS Consumer Guide
Listing of up-coming comics from all the publishers.

staff

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EDITORIAL

Comics Feature. Depending on your viewpoint one of two questions must be occurring to you just about now. Some of you, those who have read the first twenty-odd issues of this magazine, are asking whither goest Comics Feature. While others of you are even more bewildered and asking why there is a Comics Feature at all. I hope to answer both of those questions in a way that will end the confusion without creating more than it eliminates. Those of you who know much of what I am about to say will simply have to bear with us.

Comic books began to organize themselves a serious fandom just about twenty years ago with the advent of the first small, ditto fanzines devoted to the hobby, the rudimentary beginnings of communication between afficianados of the four-color page and the simultaneous emergence of Marvel Comics and Stan Lee as the moving forces within the field. These forces ultimately came together to form slicker publications, small and then larger conventions and a new type of specialty store devoted almost solely to what was to become the third largest collectable in the country. And that was the birth of the direct market, those specialty stores that carry **everything** that comes out about comics as well as the comic books themselves, in all of their myriad formats. The dittoed fanzines had slowly transformed into semi-professional typeset magazines presenting professional writing and art devoted to comic books, comic strips, art portfolios and animation. RBCC an NMP title which began publication twenty years ago was one of the pioneers in the early stages of fandom. **Comics Feature** was the first of the modern publications to be typeset and was the first to pay contributors for their work. Now **Comics Feature** is taking that next major step, that of emerging from the small group of people lucky enough to have easy access to a specialty store—the direct market—to that larger world that buys their magazines in supermarkets, convenience stores, bookstores and newsstands. **Comics Feature** and other NMP titles have been at the forefront of every major change in the field including this leap from the direct market to the "real world" in which we hope to reach out to everyone with heart and soul enough to care about and be excited by the exploits of colorfully clad characters in their battles to save the world from villainy, imagination enough to wonder at the antics of animated mice and ducks and memories enough to remember those dazzling days of yesteryear when the adventure comic strip dramatically projected the exploits of detectives, jungle adventurers and outer space heroes.

Comics Feature's many fans and readers will notice several changes in the presentation of the magazine and in the roster of contributors. We have added sixteen pages of full color artwork to better illustrate our many features and we have redesigned many of our columns to be more exciting to read. We have also welcomed the likes of Steve Bissette [the artist of DC's **Swamp Thing**], James Van Hise [a frequent contributor to such publications as **Cinefantastique** and **Comics Scene** and the author of the recently published **Art of Al Williamson**] and Ron Goulart [the author of various novels including **The Flying Sorcerors** and a regular contributor to **Twilight Zone Magazine** and **Starlog**] to the pages of our magazine. And we are taking many more steps to make **Comics Feature** the complete magazine about comics in their varied formats.

We will continue our exclusive news coverage of comic books, comic strips and animation and our preview interviews with the writers and artists of exciting new titles, including those only distributed within the direct market [and we will let everyone interested know how to obtain them].

We will continue to interview the most exciting personalities within the field in a similar fashion to the John Byrne interview in this issue. And our interviews will not only cover the surface features announcing the individual's latest projects but will also relate how the creator's ideas come about, what earlier influences they work under and what they are like as people as well as comic book personalities. Next issue we talk to the writers of the **X-Men** and the **Teen Titans,** the two most popular comic books of all. Stay tuned, the excitement is yet to come.

FEATURE NEWS

WAR?

MARVEL VS DC VS THE INDEPENDENTS

The latest issue of **The First Edition,** the newsletter of First Comics, one of the more successful of the new breed of small, independent comic book publishers, is virtually a cry of anguish and a war dance:

"As I sit in my office I wonder if the headline to this column would ever get by the Comics Code Authority. Probably not. I also wonder how many people would sit still and let someone take a dump on them. Probably not many. But I think there's a major comics company out there that believes many in our industry would sit still and let their faces be covered with muck."

Although unnamed, the body of the piece makes clear that the "culprit" is none other than Marvel Comics, the largest publisher of comic books in the United States. The complaint is that a combination of high-priced reprints and other new releases "are geared to dry up distributor capital...". The column, penned by Rick Obadiah, the Publisher of First Comics, goes on to say that the dumping "effects all publishers, all retailers, all distributors, all artists, all creators. This massive influx of new material and its effect on the market must be dealt with." First Comics first move towards dealing with the situation was to delay the release of their newest and as yet unannounced title.

Marvel Comics has indeed increased the quantity of product which it releases in a month. Marvel spokespeople have cited two reasons for the massive outpouring of new product. First, Cadence has only recently fought off an agressive takeover attempt and although the battle seems won, the winning was very expensive as it involved the buyback of a substantial amount of open shares of stock. Higher than normal profits are necessary to keep the company marginally healthy and to pay off the newly-formed debt most of which is of a short term nature. Second, just as First Comics has realized, Marvel does indeed intend to make the waters hot for the myriad, newly-launched comic book publishers. The past two years have seen a deluge of new companies entering the market with little capital and sometimes less business sense; has seen them prosper in a market desparately crying for new material—any material. Marvel has viewed this situation with suspicion and concern and plans to take advantage of its dominant market position to begin closing the floodgates. Since

retailers are more prone to devote display space and inventory dollars to Marvel releases, the company intends to produce sufficient product to dry up those dollars and occupy all available space feeling that the "secondary" publishers, as Marvel views them, will feel the pinch. Many of the publishers, with First Comics as only the most obvious case in point, **have** begun to feel the pinch. Their schedules have continued to slip and their ability to agressively pursue the small pool of vital talent has lessened seemingly achieving the results that Marvel desires.

Whether Marvel will be able to maintain this strong flood of titles for a sustained period, how consumers will react to a continual flow of mini-series and reprint titles and what steps the smaller publishers will take to combat this offensive remain to be seen. Already there are various signs that many Marvel projects announced for release have been delayed, some without rescheduling.

While this economic warfare has come to dominate the direct market comic book shops which carry the varied lines of publications, other interesting changes have begun that will affect all comic book buyers regardless of where they buy their product. Atari, a division of Warner Communications, the parent company of DC Comics, has posted second quarter losses of $310 million, which were somewhat offset by other divisions profits bringing Warner's net loss to a staggering $283.4 million. With its parent company experiencing so massive a setback, DC Comics will be forced to take a much closer look at new proposals and market projections lest the originally planned expansion spree lead to problems similar to those now besetting Atari. How this management psychology will manifest itself in a market currently experiencing major growth from its chief rival remains to be seen. Early signs are not promising. A quick look at some of the shipping groups for the past two months illustrates the problem:

August 2 shipping—partially consisted of **Green Lantern** #70 delayed from July 26, **Sgt. Rock** #382, **Batman and the Outsiders** #4 and **Warlord** #75 also delayed from that week and saw previously scheduled **Detective** #532, **World's Finest** #297 and **Atom** #3 delayed to August 16 while **Firestorm Annual** #1 was delayed indefinitely and **Camelot** #10 was postponed over a month;

August 9 shipping—previously scheduled as a skip week saw the release of the delayed **Detective, World's Finest** and **Atom, Thriller** #1 which had been postponed from July 26 and **Captain Carrot** #20 which had been delayed even longer;

August 16 shipping—on target other than the oft-delayed **Firestorm**;

August 23 shipping—**Star Trek** #1 delayed by two months [it would later be delayed again], and both **Omega Men** and **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** delayed by one week;

September 6 shipping— **Atom** #4 delayed one week while **Camelot** #11 was delayed two months although the **Firestorm Annual** finally saw release;

September 13 [the latest week as this is written] shipping—**Ronin** #3 and **Camelot** #9 both finally saw print although the relief of this is somewhat dulled by the realization that **Camelot** #11 had originally been scheduled for release the prior week, **Atom** #4 finally saw print even as **Vigalante** #3 was delayed a full month while #2 was scheduled for shipping that week.

Unfortunately the pattern is clear and even this small snapshot spotlights the problem that the company will face. Combining this spate of schedule snafus with the rapidly expanding product lines shipping from other publishers and the shrinking pool of top talent may leave an overly conservative management in something of an economic bind.

How these various market forces—Marvel opening the floodgates, the independents reeling and attempting to defend themselves by establishing a niche within the market, DC attempting to operate under the strictures of its troubled parent corporation while beset with scheduling delays—will combine to change the industry and the comic books we all buy remains to be seen. In any case, we should be in for a very interesting year ahead.

MARVEL'S STAR WARS AFTER JEDI

Darth Vader is dead. The Emperor is dead. The Rebellion may very well be over. What do you do when you are a talented, young writer writing the **Star Wars** comic book when **Return of the Jedi** comes out and changes much of your universe? Well, according to Mary Jo Duffy, the author of Marvel Comics' **Star Wars** comic book, you begin to ask yourself how these major changes effect the lives of the characters you have been writing about.

"The people of the rebellion dedicated the last six years of their lives—at least in our real time—to nothing but the overthrow of the government and now that they have succeeded in their aims does that necessarily mean that they are fit to govern? "and" Does that mean that they can decide among themselves who will be the governors?" are two questions which Duffy will be addressing in upcoming issues. Duffy feels that there are a number of very good characters present in the Star Wars mythos and that there are a large number of unresolved situations that are potentially rich with drama.

"At first I was very, very daunted by the notion that it was over but, as a matter of fact, most of the characters survived and I see situations that are fraught with tension that lie ahead for them. As long as Lucas Films doesn't veto my ideas, I'm very confident and happy about what we can do with the storylines. We've got Han Solo back, who has been a much missed character.

"During the entire time of the movies, all of the characters have had a set goal and cause in their mind and there is a very difficult problem to deal with and that is: what do you do when you have achieved your goals? That's a problem I would like to do something with. How does each of them handle the problem of achieving their goals and how their reactions contrast?"

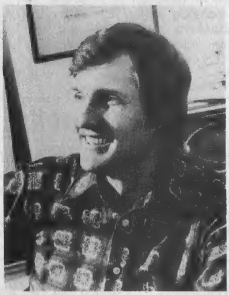
What does Duffy plan to do on the broader stage with the universe itself? That apparently she's not quite ready to answer yet, "I'd rather not say right now because that's pretty intrinsic to the plotlines I have in the works...what is left is a question I don't want to answer casually because it's something that I am going to devote a lot of time to, exploring the story line. I'd just as soon not tip my hand."

She seems less concerned with the fate of the Empire and the remaining Imperial Governors than with the interaction between the protagonists as she goes on to explain, "I'm not God. I'm not interested in controlling the universe. I am a writer and I am very interested in those people as characters. I think that the strength of it is that people care about those characters...they care passionately."

Since the comic book version of the movie is being published in three different formats and does not take place within the regular comic book, deciding just when the changes should be reflected is also a problem which she has confronted, "When I found out that we were going to lose Vader, I wanted to have one last fling with him. We're using our last couple of issues to dovetail into the movie. Everything that we have been doing the last few months has been to cause our plotlines to all come together and unite to bring us to one minute before the opening of the movie and then we start the following issue immediately after the movie. You can take the movie and fit it in between #79 and #80. It fits exactly."

Mary Jo Duffy is obviously one of those people who care greatly about the **Star Wars** characters and about the stories which she writes. While she is every inch the professional she is also very much the fan.

Balderdash
BY WAYNE STAYSKAL
TELL ME, BALDERDASH, WHY DID THEY SEND YOU TO OBEDIENCE SCHOOL?
WHAT DID THEY HOPE YOU'D LEARN TO DO HERE?
PROBABLY THE DISHES!
STAYSKAL
I SURE WISH HOUSES WOULD START SELLING FASTER!
FOR SALE
THE SLUMP HAS REALLY FOULED UP MY LIFE STYLE!
I HAVEN'T CHASED A WELCOME WAGON LADY IN WEEKS!
STAYSKAL



Editorial cartoonist Wayne Stayskal has created a comic strip called **Balderdash.**

It's about a large, lovable dog who frequently outsmarts his master, George, but who gets tangled up in the traps of the dogcatchers and the postman. He brags to his pal Oscar and cowers at the mention of the neighborhood bully, Floyd.

Describing the relationship between Balderdash and his master, George, Stayskal says, "Balderdash is like a loved nephew, who has moved in for a stay longer than George ever thought possible...but if there is one thing George has learned in life, it's how to cope, and I guess that makes him the perfect foil."

Stayskal, who is also known for his sydicated editorial cartoons and his sports panel, **Trim's Arena,** first got the idea for **Balderdash** about a year ago and has been developing it since.

In creating **Balderdash**, Stayskal's aim was to combine traditional elements with more contemporary ones, drawing on the look of the favorite strips and cartoons of his youth. "Balderdash is prone to many of the familier foibles and situations of classic comic strip cartoon dogs", says Stayskal. "He runs after the mailman and away from the dogcatcher; he loves to eat and loll around on the furniture when his 'people' are out of the house. But Balderdash", he adds, "is mostly a 1980s dog. He would rather eat a fast-food hamburger than go bird-hunting; and his master George pages him with a beeper."

In addition to George and George's wife Martha, there are Balderdash's canine companions, Oscar, his best buddy, and Floyd, the neighborhood tough. "Floyd relaxes by chasing cats", explains Stayskal, "...the ones in the zoo."

Stayskal, whose editorial cartoons have been widely praised, says that he got his first interest in cartooning from the comic page. He names **Dick Tracy** and **Little Orphan Annie** as early favorites, and notes the major role that Daisy, the dog, once played in the **Blondie** strip. Characters like Daisy, he says, as well as others from Disney and Warner Brothers cartoons, are the progenitors of Balderdash.

"The look of Balderdash owes much to animated cartoons", he says. "I've worked to convey a sense of motion. Dogs, to use the word another way, are very animated. It gives the strip a sense of liveliness that I've found missing in those strips cluttered with thought balloons."

Stayskal, a lifelong Chicagoan, served three years in the Air Force before attending Chicago's Academy of Fine Art. He then worked as a commercial artist for a year, but has worked for Chicago newspapers since 1957, starting in the art department of The American and becoming an assistant to Vaughn Shoemaker in 1962. He is married and the father of four boys. The Stayskals live in Wayne, a Chicago suburb.

Balderdash, available daily and Sunday, starts Monday, October 3, 1983, and already lined-up for the debut are The Colorado Springs Gazette, The Denver Post, The Dallas Times Herald, The San Antonio Express and The Chicago Tribune.

FEATURE NEWS

From a report in The Model Retailer; Gary Gygax, creator of the popular fantasy role-playing game, Dungeons & Dragons, and Marvel Productions Ltd., will co-produce a D & D cartoon series for CBS.

Pictured at left: David De Patie, President of Marvel Productions, Gary Gygax, creator of D & D, and Judy Price, Vice President, CBS children's special programming.

Warring factions within the Walt Disney Studios have brought about the cancellation of their announced animated adaptation of the Thomas Disch short story "The Brave Little Toaster".

Disney is still tinkering with their planned adaptation of the novel **Who Framed Roger Rabbit?**

The highly praised B&W short "Vincent" is being handled differently from other shorts Disney has made in that it is getting special bookings and isn't being released as the tag end on one of their feature releases.

Another Disney short receiving praise is "Fun With Mr. Future", which was originally made for the cancelled network TV show. What happened was that even after the series was cancelled, the animation department for the series continued to operate and it produced this assigned short.

On a darker note, some fans have been complaining that the new Disney channel has been showing classic Disney shorts in a form apparently edited to fit a prearranged time slot.

*****

"The Duck Factor" is a new fall series starring Jack Gilford which takes place in an animation studio. Animation will be included to show what the people there are working on and discussing, with the work being done by Playhouse Pictures. The mythical studio will be producing adventures of a character tentatively named Dippy Duck.

*****

Don Bluth Productions is riding high on the success of their first fully animated video game, "Dragon's Lair", which contains some forty minutes of full animation. As planned, this game is revitalizing a sagging industry and has already grossed forty million dollars world wide in its first few weeks of availability, more than **The Secret of NIMH** has grossed in the year and a half of its release. Bluth intends to continue on his winning streak by producing five new animated video games a year. He got into the market when he realized that the video game industry made more money in 1982 than the film industry, even though '82 was the year of **ET!**

*****

As a footnote, the ET videogame from Atari was deemed a flop for several good reasons. First, it was too simple and precluded a long term interest in returning to play it. Second, it was conceived and put into production in less than two months while other games take from six months to a year to develop and produce. And lastly, at least in the home version, it was possible to strend the man chasing ET so that he ran around in a never ending circle while ET went about his business without the pressure of being chased.

*****

The Ralph Bakshi/Frank Frazetta production of **Fire & Ice** has yet to find an American distributor. Although released in Europe, American distributors have turned it down upon viewing it. People who have seen it describe a preponderance of rotoscoping but nice animation on such things as dinosaurs. Also, the women rotoscoped clearly were not well enough endowed for the producer's tastes as their breasts were obviously enhanced in the animation process.

*****

A very recent issue of **Emmy** magazine featured a hard look at American animation and its future in light of all the work being farmed out to Taiwan, Korea and Australia. The article was written by Charles Howell, an animation writer at Hanna/Barbera, and because Howell pulled no punches and named names, his future in the business will probably be brief, although most industry insiders were glad to see the article appear and stand behind Howell's comments.

*****

Twice Upon A Time [which has received universally bad reviews] has received a limited release in Los Angeles and New York. **The Plague Dogs** [based on the novel by Richard **Watership Down** Adams] has only received American screenings at film festivals and other animation fests. A massive L.A. area animation fest asked to have screenings of such films as **Fire & Ice** and **Twice Upon A Time**, but the studios demurred, not wishing to have advance bad reviews harm their opportunities to finally acquire national distribution.

*****

Filmation this year instituted a new policy in which all of their animators had to pass a drawing test in order to return to work when the production season began. It makes one wonder what the criterion for employment had been prior to this.

*****

Ray Bradbury recently explained why he took his name off the animated TV version of the bestselling book **Gnomes.** When Bradbury was approached to adapt it, he explained that he would only if he could create some characters of trolls as a counterpoint to the sickeningly sweet Gnomes. When he turned in the script the producers loved it but Bradbury warned them that if they came back and said that they had to start cutting things because it was too expensive, that the story would be irreparably harmed, it would look cheap, would receive bad reviews and only air on TV once. When the network came back to him explaining why most of the troll material had to be cut for reasons of expense, Bradbury took his name off the project and all of his dire predictions did indeed come to pass.

Bradbury is currently adapting "Little Nemo in Slumberland", based on the classic Winsor McCay comic strip, for an animated film to be produced by Gary Kurtz. Bradbury explained that he only agreed to do the project after he came up with a successful idea for incorporating the McCay material without using a static format wherein one bizarre adventure has nothing to do with the other as a film needs to have a continuing plot while a Sunday page can change every week or so if need be.

STRIP TEASE

KEITH GEBERS

SCORCHY SMITH

By 1930, the adventure strip was being spawned. Already Hal Foster's **Tarzan** had completed a ten-week test run, and several other artists were fumbling with fledgling efforts. But it was the giant Associated Press Newsfeatures Syndicate that was going to launch a full-scale offensive in the area of adventure strips. A.P. cocked their guns and let go with a volley of five daily comics, two of them adventure strips: **Dickie Dare** by Milton Caniff and **Scorchy Smith.**

Scorchy was inspired by the sensational flying exploits of Charles Lindbergh and the success of the pulp aviation magazines on the nation's newsstands. America was air-happy and the management of Associated Press Newsfeatures wanted to capitalize on this craze through a newspaper strip. Scorchy appeared in most papers for the first time on March 19, 1930, written and illustrated by John. C. Terry, who's brother Paul would create Terry Toons for the movies a short time later.

Scorchy started his career as a teen-aged, curley haired pilot who left his big city home to look for a missing aviator pal in the snow-bound wilds of Montana. Here Scorchy would spend the better part of four years adventuring with his new-found sidekick, Jake the Wolfhunter. Scorch would fall deeply in love with a rich farm girl named Betty, and although she would have frequent rivals she remained the female interest during the early years of the saga.

John Terry had a typical art style for the period. The panels were all of a simple crow-quill line and had rather a crude appearance. The only criticism in retrospect is that John C. Terry was far better at drawing Montana

horses than airplanes. The planes had sort of a Mickey Mouse appearance, with fuselages bending while in a steep bank and wing and tail surfaces not in proportion to the rest of the craft. Scorchy was represented as the red-blooded All-American boy, and other than that was totally devoid of character.

By June 1934, it was evident that something was happening to the strip. The art lines became finer, Scorchy looks more like Charles Lindbergh then ever, and the airplanes were downright beautiful, scale drawings of real planes like the Lockheeds, Martins and Boeings that were dotting the skies over America. Although the signature of John Terry still appeared, it was evident that somebody else had a hand in the work. Then in August 1934, the name Noel Sickles replaced Terry's.

Through the work of Noel Sickles the adventure strip reached its first stage of maturity. Sickles had worked with his friend Milton Caniff in an art studio before they both entered comics. Even today, Sickles is regarded as a model and inspiration for other artists. His work is classic. Weeks after he started penning Scorchy he started using Ben Day shading, which is a system of dots to give the art work tone. In linework he aimed for impression rather then total detail, but this gave the strip extra dimension and action. Sickles early work on Scorchy has been described as sketchy but even the critics admit it was excellent.

Noel Sickles created Scorchy for a little over two years, but the strip went through constant evolvement. Scorchy soon no longer looked like Charles Lindbergh, and for awhile Sickles even straightened his hero's hair, although it retained a very unruly appearance. Scorch moved away from the image of a true red-white-and-blue boy and matured into a young but hardened soldier-of-fortune; a self-admitted drifter. Betty got tired of waiting for him and jilted him for a gentlemen farmer. Scorch shook hands forever with Jake the Wolfhunter, promising someday to return. He never did.

Scorchy teamed up with a former German ace, Heinrich Himmelstoss and globe-trotted through Canada, Asia and Africa. The girls were even cast as being on the rough side. There was Mickey, the tom-boy from Canada, Lloyce the Gaucho Girl with a snapping whip. And for one day's strip in the summer of 1936, Scorchy had a shipboard romance with a nameless girl while he was on his way to Italy to get new plane parts.

Sickles constantly played with the artwork. In the Autumn of 1936 he dropped Ben Day shading and worked with solid line shadows with extremely good effect, still offering suggestion, rather than detail. Scorchy also changed from a thin wiry youth to a tough solid brute. The curly hair with heavy lock hanging over the forehead returned. Strangely enough he was a dead ringer for Pat Ryan in the Caniff

strip, **Terry and the Pirates.** In fact, they were such dead ringers I, as a small child, used to think they were the same character.

Noel Sickles left the strip to become a commercial artist and magazine illustrator in December 1936. His replacement was a slightly built, sandy haired youngster named Bert Chrisman. Chrisman's style was similar to Sickles, however he employed greater detail in his backgrounds. Scorchy didn't evolve in character during the Chrisman era, but remained static. The young artist was a Navy veteran and a pilot, and very sensitive. He actually became caught up in the strip, and wanted to live it. He placed Scorchy in China for a series of adventures, and Chrisman became so attached to the Chinese cause against invading Japan he joined Chenault's Flying Tigers. He left the strip to become a war pilot. Then in early 1942, Bert Chrisman engaged a flight of enemy fighters over Burma. Days later his bullet riddled body was found in a rice paddy, his parachute unopened.

In early 1939, Howell Dodd was assigned to do Scorchy, more-or-less as a stop-gap and he lasted hardly a year at the job. Dodd's work remained anonymous, since he did not sign his name to the strip. Although there was no progression in the hero's character, Dodd can still be credited with maintaining the high quality of the strip. However, his rendering of guns, cars and airplanes fell far short of Sickles and Chrisman.

Scorchy Smith was still one of this country's best known strips in 1940, although rival offerings like **Barney Baxter, Smilin' Jack** and Terry were making definite inroads. However, **Skyroads** and **Tailspin Tommy** were rapidly falling off in popularity, so A.P. wasn't presented with any real problem. Following Dodd, the syndicate put young Frank Robbins to work on the strip.

IN PERFECT FORMATION, ARMARA'S TANKS BLOCK THE TAKE-OFF OF THE PLANES, AND THEIR PIKE FORCES SCORCHY AND HIS MEN TO TAKE COVER...!
THEY OUTNUMBER US, SCORCHY - AND OUR SMALL GUNS ARE USELESS AGAINST THOSE TANKS! DO YOU THINK WE'D BETTER GIVE UP? WHAT D'YA SAY?
I'D BE SUICIDE TO SURRENDER! THOSE VICTORY CRAZY SOLDIERS WOULD BUTCHER US - WE CAN'T SAVE THE SHIPS, BUT WE MAY SAVE OUR NECKS! PASS THE WORD TO RUN FOR THE STEEL WATER TANK!
THEY RETREAT TO THE WATER TANK, SENOR -
THAT'S AS FAR AS THEY'LL GET! HAUL OUT YOUR MACHINE GUNS!
BREAK FOR IT BOYS! - ON TOP OF THE WATER TOWER AND HOLD YOUR FIRE 'TIL THEY CHARGE!
4-3
SCORCHY AND HIS MEN BAIT TO THE FRIENDLY HAVEN ACROSS THE RAILROAD TRACKS.

This was Noel Sickles work in early (April) 1935. The art work is very sketchy, though the detail, technically, is outstanding. Notice the similarity (in the last panel) between Charles Lindberg and Scorchy.

During the Robbins years, from 1940 until mid-1944, Scorchy was to soar to new heights of critical acclaim. Robbins brought a new style to the strip, utilizing the heavy-line approach, drawn with a clotted stub, used so effectively later on his "Johnny Hazard" strip. In the early Robbins' offerings, Ben Day shading was used sparingly, but this soon gave way to the heavy and now famous Robbins' slashes of the dark and light. Characterwise, Scorchy changed from a worried and overly conscientious soldier of fortune to a flippant but gutty adventurer. He even smoked cigarettes and enjoyed good food and nice clothes.

During his early panels, Robbins' airplanes were nothing outstanding, but this was to change during the war years, when he developed into one of the world's finest technical artists in the field, even surpassing Caniff in delivering authenticity. His stories were very good, one featuring a Russian girl-pilot Lhassa. Robbins' villains were the best that could be offered, even by today's standards. Fat Baron Van Todt, who captured and tortured Scorch and Lhassa in 1943, was as devious and ugly as any badman that ever appeared in the comics. However, during the war years, those of us who were long time Scorchy fans hoped for a return of Hienie Himmelstoss, who was Scorchy's pal during the mid-1930s. It would have been interesting to see Hienie return as an enemy ace, but unfortunately too many writers had already penned Scorchy, and since Sickles' time, little regard to the past was heeded.

Robbins left the strip in 1944 and Scorchy passed to Edmund Good. Good's drawing was a little more delicate than Robbins, and storywise he attempted to give Scorchy a little more maturity. Cigarettes gave way to a pipe, and Scorch fell deeply in love

with a U.S.O. entertainer named Kathy. They planned to marry but Scorchy kept getting sent to other theatres of action. At war's end, Scorchy finally was mustered out of the Air Force with a head injury.

The hey-day of Scorchy Smith was over. Other syndicates, willing to pay their artists far more than A.P., had constantly nibbled away at the popularity of old Scorch, and Associated Press had neglected trying to add new papers. One by one many old subscribers were switching to the newer strips.

Well-known cartoonist Rodlow Willard, who had been doing work for the Fiction House comic group, took over the strip in the Spring of 1946. For the first time since Noel Sickles, the comic completely changed complexion. The drawing took on a stylistic nature. Although Scorchy still looked like Scorchy, the characters were more angular. Virtually all links with the past were broken. Kathy made a reappearance in 1949, disguised as an Arabian princess. But when Scorchy tried to pinpoint her identity through a birth certificate, we fans found that she was born in 1932. Now, how could that be? How could she be born in 1932 and be his sweetheart in the war. At war's end she would have been 13 years old. Scorchy Smith a cradle-robber? Never!

In the early 1950s a flying saucer picked up Scorchy and transported him to the planet Astra for a series of adventures. Creator Rodlow Willard was attempting to put new life into the strip and get on the bandwagon of Science Fiction popularity. However, all but the true-blue Scorchy Smith enthusiast began turning away from the strip. Willard's science fiction was several levels below Frazetta's or Williamson's.

Rod Willard left Scorchy on Astra in the Autumn of 1953, and for awhile it appeared that R.B. Fuller penned the strip, although there is no documentary proof of this. Fuller had been the creator of the A.P. strip **Oakey Doakes,** which was a silly little offering featuring Don Quixote characters in a Medieval setting. For a few weeks the comic had the Fuller style artwork of angular characters with skinny legs, and even though the adventures were placed on another planet, hero and villain alike rode horses and wore armour like a 15th Century knight.

Al Hollingsworth took over for a short stint in early 1954. It apparently was a try-out period that just didn't jell. Hollingsworth showed earmarks of being a fair artist for some of the panels showed promise, consisting of fine lines and Ben Day sheding. But Hollingsworth just could not draw Scorchy. He finally took to drawing him only from the side view, but our hero looked far out of place with the other characters in the strip. Hollingsworth tried to give Scorchy a semblance of reality again by bringing him back to Earth and then assigning him to a US mission to Mars. But at this point, A.P. decided to rejuvenate its comic lineup as a last ditch effort and a new artist was assigned to the strip.

George Tuska was a well established comic book artist before taking on Scorchy in the summer of 1954. When he took over Scorchy the few old time fans left shouted for joy. Here again was Scorchy Smith of old. The Sickles-Chrisman-Robbins era was being revived, all dressed up in modern fashion. Tuska was an artist in the classic-adventure mold and brought back the old glamor of Scorchy. Maybe his jaw was a little squarer than the old Scorchy, but shades of the old days were there. Scorchy was again the adventure-for-adventure's sake soldier-of-fortune. He fought colorful bearded villains on Mars, he raced powered snow-sleds, and canoed through alligator-infested South American jungle streams.

George Tuska stayed with the strip until the Autumn of 1959, fully five years, but A.P. Newsfeatures could now hardly care less about comic strips. Tuska left Scorchy for a short stint on the daily **Buck Rogers** strip and John Horris took over the chores on Scorchy. It would seem that there never was a less likely choice than Horris. In the mid-1930s he took over the A.P. daily single-panel **Neighborly Neighbors** which featured a rural philosopher named Horsefeather Peters. When that feature was discontinued in 1954, Horris did a short-lived A.P. domestic comedy strip, plus some political cartoons.

Horris' **Scorchy Smith** followed the late 1950-type adventure line. Old Scorchy was an outdoor adventurer, somewhat patterned after the movie's Rory Calhoun. The adventures were more like wild goose chases, and although Horris made an honest effort, Scorchy didn't excite anybody.

The strip died in May, 1961. At one time, in the mid-1930s, Scorchy was the king of adventure strips, starring in hundreds of papers in the United States and abroad. For years he was a leader in the pioneer comic book **Famous Funnies.** Gradually, the number of subscribing papers fell off until there was less than a handful One of the very last was the Grants Pass, Oregon Daily Courier, serving a town of 10,000 people The Courier had carried Scorchy since its beginning. But on May 30, 1961, in a small bold-faced box on the front page an item read: "The Courier, in an attempt to upgrade its quality, has decided to discontinue a number of its comic strips. Among them, **Scorchy Smith**, which will be replaced by **Buz Sawyer.**" And so, after thirty-one years, eleven artists, and hundreds of adventures, **Scorchy Smith** was laid to rest, the Courier's small notice being his only obituary.

The Olde Bookdealer

GUD BOOX

STEVE BISSETTE

WARREN: R.I.P.

Some exceptional comics lay buried beneath the lurid excesses, extreme criticism, bad press and pointed lawsuits that haunt the wretched demise of the Warren magazine line...brilliant jewels gleam amid the often dull and sporadically reprehensible contents that cluttered the final issues of Warren's monthly illustrated Captain Company catalogs: **Eerie, Creepy, Vampirella, 1984, The Rook**, etc.

Case in point: even the inarguably and perhaps calculatedly excretal **1984/1984** (the title change occurred with number 11) began its run with some items of interest amid the slush. Though the magazine's approach was evident with its inception (the tip-off, for me, was Bill Dubay's rewriting into profane and gratuitous incomprehensibility of two Wally Wood stories in **1984** #1 and 2; if Pacific is indeed publishing collections of Wood's body of Warren work, the restoration of these stories to their original form would be a worthwhile project), the ravishing covers (by Richard Corben and Patrick Woodroffe) kept prompting me to pick the zine up from the stands. The keystone was Jan Strnad and Corben's color series "Mutant World" (**1984** #1-8); unlike nearly every other piece in the magazine, the creators' affection for their characters in "Mutant World" was genuine and compelling, the sole glimmer of human caring and warmth to shine in the book, given even the desolation and savage violence depicted throughout the story. Once the series reached its surprisingly soulful conclusion, there was nothing more to keep me wallowing in the magazine's depressing excesses. I soon lost all interest, despite the continual dexterity of Alex Nino's mad graphics (my particular favorite being "In The Beginning...!", wherein the origin of life on earth is traced back to micro-organisms released in Earth's virgin seas by a defecating alien: DuBay's best shit joke, in **1984** #3), some experimental visual pieces (most notably, Strnad and Corben's retouched photo-collage story "Ogre in #4) and occasional color stories (only Herb Arnold's "Starfire" in #9 struck a chord, and that **only** for the disorienting revelation of the lead character's female identity in a deftly conceived and executed climax), and the debuts of artists (like Michael Saenz) whose later works away from the festering touch of **1984** offered much greener and more accessible pastures.

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Whenever the interminable reprinting and reworking of old Warren material took the form of dedicating complete issues to showcasing the works of individual artists (as has been done with Torres, Toth, Wrightson, Williamson, Wood, Corben, Nino, Adams, etc.), these zines handsomely delivered the goods, especially to those who are partial to the particular artist on display. Undeniably, Warren's product had consistently attracted a wide variety of extraordinary talents to his pages, and that was as true in the latter years as it was in the days of the Frazetta covers, or the Corben color inserts, or Eisner's **Spirit** revival, or...

For instance, whatever one may say about **Bruce Jones'** work before (in the pages of Skywald's horror zines, such as **Psycho** and **Nightmare,** and Marvel's **Unknown Worlds of Science Fiction,** with stories Jones both wrote and drew) or since (at Marvel and currently with PC), I still consider some of the stories written by Jones for **Creepy, Eerie,** and **Vampirella** among the best illustrated fiction in the genre...especially those delineated by the like of Berni Wrightson (such as "Clarice" in **Creepy #113**—reprinted from an earlier issue) and Richard Corben, and **particularly** the latter's collaborative efforts with Jones. Oh, Jones could certainly pull his share of boners (as they might say in **1984**, nyuk nyuk nyuk) with the worst of 'em, and the occasional tale that relied on the tried-and-true EC formula punchline-jolt to culminate nasty stereotypical female-male relationships (an approach that unfortunately rears its head in PC's **Twisted Tales**) certainly leaves a bad taste in the mouth, an aspect all the more regrettable when these stories are beautifully realised (again, see the early issues of **Twisted Tales).**

Russ Hearth's evocative execution of Jone's story "Yellow Heat" in **Vampi #58** is a prime example of how his reliance on a 'twist ending' with explicit sexual (even sexist) over-

THE CYLIS EMERGENCIES WITHIN CELCELBA STOOD AT ATTENTION AS THE CHIEF WHISPERED A HAND-SIGNAL FOR HER WARRIORS RETURN
SIX WEEKS HAVE SPENT SINCE HE CAST OFF TO ALL THE SEAS, WITH SALMON

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tones backfires; Heath's vivid art-work and pacing breathes tangible life into Jones' thoroughly engaging story. We identify with and hope for the young Black African hero during his violent rites of passage into manhood (alone, hunting for lion on the savannah), but the final panel's cannibalism punchline steps our intense involvement to rub our nose in a pile of shit hidden by the mechanical contrivances he has cleverly misled us with. All the reader may have experienced and felt is rudely negated to no effect, beyond the superb telling of an empty black joke (no pun intended). Devious and shocking, perhaps, but what feels like solid food suddenly becomes vacuum-dried, and the final impression is hardly satisfaction. The "EC Formula" **had** teeth when in the hands of the precursors thirty years ago, but the endless imitations, variations, repititions and emulations (homages) have gummed the formula to threads when it serves only as a vehicle for yet another bad joke; an audacious enough feat to provide fresh air and substance in the context of the 1950s, perhaps, but an empty manipulative exercise reeking of stale air after having been relentlessly dragged through the paces over and over ad infinitum (and in every media: **Creepshow,** etc) until we all know it by heart.

Good for a grim chuckle, a bit of fun, maybe, if you're in the right mood, nothing wrong with that...but consider the effectiveness of Jones' horror stories when he and the artist put the same impeccable effort into telling a story with some emotional weight and...well...**heart** (literally, as in — choke! — Corben's color visualisation of "In Deep", **Creepy #83**). Viola! The creaky devices spring to life, the horrifying extremities make the skin crawl and one's outrage at what is being depicted reinforces, rather than diffuses, one's identification with the characters and events, and the tired ol' half-expected, almost - obligatory twisteroo finale actualy **moves** us to gasp, or ache with sadness; to turn away aghast at the tragic final blow, or even to open our eyes in wonder.

Jones has proved himself capable of such marvelous accomplishments when his stories have centered themselves on the emotional weight of **love,** genuine love, whether it precipitate positive or negative (which is of course the tendency; these **are** horror stories we're talking about) effects in the telling of the tale. And I **do** mean **love** here, for although these love stories may involve, quite explicitly, sexual relationships, there is no real emotional weight behind those stories Jones tends to write which involve nothing **other** than a perverse sexual 'twist' (as in "Yellow Heat", or in **Twisted Tales**: "Infected" and "Out of His Depth" in #1, "Infant Terrible" in #2) for their impact—again, sick jokes, meant only to fool you long enough to repulse you, with no aim to evoke any emotion **other** than that repulsion. There is a terrible poetry and clarity in Jones' **love** stories, though, and this is the body of his work which I consider unique and even revelatory in the genre as it has existed in comics since the demise of the EC titles.

"In Deep" depicts an accident at sea which tests a young husband's love for his wife beyond the limits of endurance and sanity. This **isn't** comic-book 'justice'-just good people in the wrong place at the wrong time, and because the love between this couple is so genuinely conveyed and felt, the truly horrifying and grimly realistic fate which overwhelms them becomes unbearable to "watch". We are helpless in the grip of the author's and artist's clinical, unflinching eye on these unrelentingly tragic events, but the attention to beauty as well as carnage, to the heart as well as the horror, leaves us heartsick at the story's final grisly moment. It is cruel, and it is manipulative, but the deeply felt emotional drive of the story redeems even this final brutal note. The extremes seem to reveal truths, rather then just leave us open to being the butt of a malignant pun.

An even better example lies in another color Jones/Corben effort (which, like "In Deep", is a flashback framed by a brilliantly conceived and rendered black-and-white sequence) entitled "You're A Big Girl Now" in **Eerie #81**. Given the Frazetta 'gag' cover as a basis, a painting of a giant Fay Wray (busty-buxom Fritz style, of course) being strafed by ape-piloted biplanes atop the Empire State Building with a tiny screaming Kong in her fist, every writer/artist team had to build upon, and perferably directly utilize, this 'gag' within their stories. Surprisingly, Jones and Corben are able to construct a deliriously incredible, yet bitterly believable, "end of the world" parable around such a preposterous image. A lovely little girl is born freakishly gigantic, killing her mother during the birth; as she grows older, and to monstrous (though attractively ideal) proportions, the emotional vacuum that she

lives in—unloved by a father who blames her for the mother's death, looked upon and exploited as a freak, and unable to in any way consummate the love she does feel for the only person who cares about her (the narrator) — finally takes its terrible toll. It is a touching tall tale, told without a single misstep, wherein the absurdity of the concept its almost ludicrous denoument only serves to make that finally ironic image all the more piercing and poignant.

Bruce Jones and Rich Corben collaborated on a number of other memorable pieces, notably the shrewdly conceived and quite funny "A Woman Scorned" (**Eerie #90**), a sly extrapolation on the wages of jealousy and sin told with considerable wit and humor; and my favorite, a tightly interwoven and mind-bogglingly convoluted time-travel trilogy: "Within You..Without You" in **Eerie #77**, "Time and Time Again" in #79, and the conclusion "Years and Mind Forever" in #87. This science-fiction espionage tale is much grimmer fare, with some savage turns of physical, psychological and emotional violence; it also portrays extreme consequences to the games of love reclaimed and love denied (though, to my mind, the twist and turns of the plot over the sustained intensity of three powerful installments finally collapses the entire carefully-wrought conundrum of deceit-within-deceit).

The cataclysmic conclusion to the trilogy doesn't hold a candle, though, to what may be Jones' best horror tale ever: "Jenifer" (**Creepy #83**), rendered with brooding brutal detail by Berni Wrightson, a classical circle-of-fate horror tale that revolves around the hideous embrace of a penultimate and thoroughly disgusting love-parasite, Jenifer. As Jenifer's silent, insatiable hunger veers from the perverse paternal love needed by a homeless, unwanted child into the dank realms of psychological and emotional rape, and over the edge into a literal lust for flesh (and finally blood), the inescapable conclusion takes on a suffocating immediacy and impact as the spidery Jenifer closes her web (deliberately? maliciously? or unknowingly? Her deformed mute visage and "those bulbous protrusions that were her eyes" do not tell us) around another 'victim', and the circular structure of the tale inevitably completes itself.

It is a singularly disturbing work, and certainly one of the most effective horror tales to ever grace the pages of a Warren magazine. It **is** often graphically direct in delivering its **frissions**, but there is a potent use of restraint in key moments to deliver a powerful emotional jolt for example, during Jenifer's initial erotic advances on the tale's unfortunate narrator Wrightson pulls from a stifling intimate shot that drives home the realisation of what is about to happen to a long, dark shot looking down at the bed, which is completely hidden in shadow. We cannot help but know what is going on, we certainly do not want to see, but the sudden restraint prods our jaded ol' imaginations into filling the gap in our own minds with images and sensations that carry more weight than any Wrightson might render at this point. Such respect for the story's own terrible momentum and the reader's own imagination aptly demonstrate how even the most unnerving and explicit horror tale **can** be told with intelligence and taste—an approach that may have sustained the Warren line far beyond the demise that was fueled by the twisted masturbatory silliness that pervaded the last of the Warren products, especially **1984** and **The Goblin**, or that may indeed elevate Jones' current crop of horrors for PC a notch or two above the senseless and dirivative tone of much of his initial offerings.

The fourteen-issue run of **The Rook** provided a brief roost for some of the field's finest veterans to thrive, presenting carefully crafted low-key adventure strips by **Lee Elias, Alex Toth** (each working from their own scripts), **John Severin** and an english-language printing of **Alfredo Alcala's** lengthy "Voltar" saga. **Alex Toth's** "Bravo for Adventure" (**Rook #3** and **4**) is the high point, a solid and gripping yarn set behind the cameras of a 1935 Hollywood studios location filming of an aerial melodrama, during which stunt pilot Jesse Bravo finds himself caught up in a convoluted plot involving a gambling racketeer out to collect on a heavy debt left in the name of a dead pilot, a deceitful associate and the romantic interests of the film director's daughter. Toth's incredible precision and economy of style lends a firecracker pacing to the action, bringing all the virtues of the grand old-fashioned traditions of storytelling represented here to a high polish; Toth's characterisations are especially memorable, full of emotional vigor, venom and wit.

Toth's last work for Warren was an even more promising introduction to a sadly aborted series: "Torpedo 1936" written by Sanchez Ebuli for **Vampirella #108, 110** and maybe **111** (that issue never reached the newstands by me, if it indeed ever emerged from the Warren vault). The first two installments deliver a marvelous depiction of the milieu of crime, murder and deceit that mob hitman Luca the Torpedo lives within: melodrama that downplays the sensationalistic cliches of the 'gangster' genre so that it can focus instead upon the strong-felt characterisations as the events strip away the surface-layers of rank and roles to reveal the vulnerable, frail and emotional core of these desperate characters. Tersely scripted by Ebuli, perfectly realised with Toth's minimalist graphics for maximum im-

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pact, "Torpedo 1936" provides an almost textbook-perfect example of just how powerful, intimate and human the comic artform can be when its potential for drama (as opposed to melodrama or fantasy) is fully explored. The last page of the first "Torpedo 1936" story (in **Vampi #108**) is the best example I can think of to illustrate my point. Luca is hired by an embittered, jilted mobster to kill a moll who dumped him; instead of killing her, Luca falls head over heels for her, and fulfills his contract to kill her with false evidence of the hit: her shoes, her clothes and her 'ventilated' bloodstained coat. When the money runs out, she dumps Luca as well, and so Luca likewise hires a hit man..who, on the last page, presents Luca with the **same** false evidence that he had provided after his own "hit". The final, wordless panel of Luca's haggard face communicates **volumes** in a more **direct** manner than **any** amount of accompanying text could hope to. It is a raw, bold and incredibly effective capper to a starkly simple turning-of-the-tables.

Sadly, unless the marketplace and the attention-spans of the comicshop audience open up to a wider range of title and subject matter, such lean stories of adventure and drama can no longer find a home in the torrential glut of super-heroes, fantasy and science fiction that so totally dominates the shape of American comics. The loss is our own, and it seems ironic that such master comic artists as Toth and Lee Elias, who have decades of experience, knowledge and skills under their belts, can no longer practice their skills when they are at their zenith, especially at a time when the comic industry is thriving (and sharing that success with the artists) like **never** before. They should be reaping the fruits of their refined talents, and we

SIT BACK, HAMLIN ...AND HAVE ANOTHER DRINK...IT'S BEEN AGES SINCE I'VE HAD A LEISURELY CONVERSATION WITH AN OLD ENEMY...NEITHER OF US MAY GET THE CHANCE AGAIN...
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should be savoring them, but such is **not** the case: Toth's energies are poured invisibly (as far as the interests of the comic reading public is concerned) into the maw of Saturday morning animation designs, and Elias (after being manhandled and 'misused' by Marvel during the 1970s) has now lost the only outlet he had for his talents with the conclusion of the Warren zines. **Surely** there is a better alternative open to both these seasoned vets and those of us who appreciate their efforts...

Between a stint on the early exploits of **The Rook** and his work on the last addition to the Warren cast of characters, **The Goblin**, Lee Elias presented his own brainchild, "Kronos", in **Rook #8-11.** Reflecting Elias' interests in reincarnation and the writings of Edgar Cayce, "Kronos" frames what is essentially a tragic World War 2 story set within the German Command as being the memory of a previous lifetime for one Vic Kronos; a memory triggered by a violent incident during which Kronos accidentally kills a mugger; a memory which is explored and relived through hypnosis.

"Kronos" made its first appearance in the ambitious but ill-fated 2-issue run of **Sojourn** (another **Sojourn** strip, John Severin's War Chief of the Crow Indians, "Eagle", found a home in **Rook's** final issues: #12-14), leaving the third installment unpublished and the complete story bottled up in the imagination of its creator until **Rook** editor Will Richardson gave Lee the rare opportunity to fully realise the project, four years after its conception and debut. Although the first installment, reprinting the three chapters drawn for the outsized **Sojourn** format, is hampered by rather monotonous and cramped page layouts (due to the difficulties of fitting the gigantic **Sojourn** pages into the standard magazine dimensions), and the fact that any reader who readily accepts the reincarnation premise will probably find the lengthy dialogues on the subject (aimed toward swaying the most skeptical Doubting Thomas) annoying, the remaining three chapters provide ample action and intrigue, and give breathing space for Lee's marvelous art.

Strikingly drawn and elegantly toned stories from the boards of Paul Gulacy, and newblood Val & John Lakey/Artifact, can be found amidst the hoary horrors of **Eerie, Creepy** and **Vampirella.** The 3-part story "The Trespasser" (**Eerie #103-105**) reunites Gulacy with writer Don McGregor for a touch of

futuristic American Gothic in the Louisiana bayou: James Colburnish doctor rescues ravishing wife from imprisonment with cancer-ravaged husband and his ruthless bodyguards in a crumbling mansion built over a hot shit pit [an abandoned nuclear waste dump]. Gulacy's vision gives considerable conviction and power to this, one of the numerous cautionary environmental hazard [acid rain, etc.] stories McGregor wrote for Warren, and stands as one of the writer's most effective exercises in story-telling since his collaboration with the same artist on **Sabre.**

The 3-part "Blood and Black Satin" [**Eerie #108-111**] teams Gulacy once again with Doug Moench's skillful scripting of a genuine modern Gothic set in Merry Ol' England on All Hallow's Eve: dashing American newspaperman attempts rescue of ravishing woman from the clutches of a revived 14th Century satanist and his minions. Both tales eschew Warren's usual Grand Guignol approach in favor of a more subdued and atmospheric brand of horror, relying on character and story development accompanied by moody visuals to weave their bitter webs, though no punches are pulled when the violent mayhem does ensue. Gulacy's sleek, mannered artwork beautifully realises the full cinematic potential of each story, with crackerjack panelogical pacing more than making up for the occasional sterile posturing and posing of characters. Indeed, the unity in the look and structure [both begin with the hero driving into the situation, and both build to fiery physical climaxes] of these two tales taken together recalls many an evening spent at a satisfying double thriller feature—"Blood on Black Satin" is particularly successful at conjuring up the dark dreadly milieu of the tastier '60s British horror films, such as **Horror Hotel** [a.k.a. **City of the Dead**], **The Devil's Bride** [a.k.a. **The Devil Rides Out**] and **Burn, Witch Burn!** [a.k.a **Night of the Eagle**].

I can only guess at who or what's behind the 'Artifact' byline—a studio, associates, a xerox machine, or simply a pseudoname for the combined talents of John and Val Lakey?—but whatever or whoever, the Lakeys/Artifact have been responsible for some of the most fascinating new work to appear in the Warren lineups last gasps. With the exception of one of their first jobs ["Vampirella: Flame Spirit" in **Vampirella #85**], they have totally reinterpreted their own use of sequential graphics to tell a story: the ordinary geometry of the comic page, of ruled and bordered boxes and orderly grids of panels, dissolves into a shimmering, fluid flow of crystal-clear imagery, rendered with delicate photographic detail.

The first piece I recollect seeing by the Lakeys, "Beastslayer" in **Creepy #112**, utilises the free-form design in such bold wonderfully realised strokes [each page depicting a single image or movement] that John's text and Val's painstaking illustrations wed seamlessly. Their later, more experimental and densely layered comicworks ["Gunplay" in **Vampirella #94,** "Duel Nature" in **Creepy #130**, credited to Laura Buscemi, John Lakey, and Artifact; "Friends in **Vampi #89**; "Lover" in **Vampi #103**] sometimes strain for effect to the point of making reading difficult—often one does not know where to look next, a snag which interrupts the flow of the story. Some may find this element, coupled with the deliberate manipulation of disorientation, deception and altered depth perceptions, just a bit much to ride with; and although the use of staged photos [with a recognisable 'stable of actors' playing the various roles in the stories] as a basis for the artwork works wonders, capturing an endless range of subtle emotional nuances that are rarely communicated so directly in American comics [especially through the female characters, thanks to Val's feminine touch], the posed action and violence is transferred so rigidly from the photo reference that all sense of movement either becomes clumsy or is lost altogether. The use of models for the monsters also betrays itself, especially in "Duel Nature", where the vicious, valiant little beastie who is in action for most of the story barely changes the position of its limbs, and despite clever design and use of lighting the damned thing never comes across as being **alive.**

Such is **not** the case with "Lover", a "silent, circuited golem" whose grimly expressionless inanimate mug exudes a disturbing spark of life. He so dominates the telling of this claustrophobic space tale [a'la **It! The Terror From Beyond Space** and **Alien**, the killer creature smashes through each successive level of the ship, murdering the crew one by one] that the reader begins to project unspeakable passions onto the shadowed, practically faceless visage...an unusual effect that is crucial to the surprisingly tender denouement. Such deliberate and intelligent refinement of the Lakey/Artifact's stylish brand of comic art. Only a handful of published work is certainly worthy of attention and further exposure, and the appearance of their art in the pages of **Heavy Metal** [May 1982; Ted White's "Sixteen and Vanilla" as adapted by Dave Bischoff] indicates that these folks are hopefully going to find other publishers who might see fit to print their extraordinary style of comic art.

As for the Warren Magazines...R.I.P., and Happy trails—

-e.j.b.

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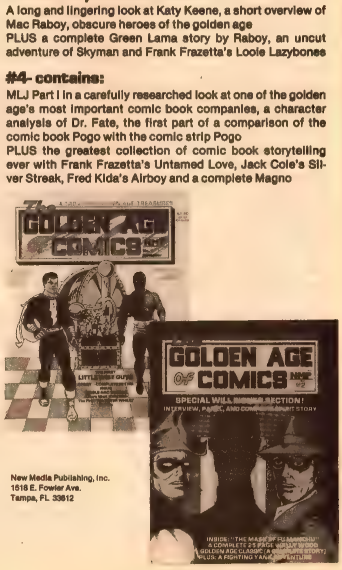

New Media Publishing, Inc.
1518 E. Fowler Ave.
Tampa, FL 33612

JOHN BYRNE

THE INTERVIEW

WELL, I'D SAY IT'S ABOUT TIME!
I'M... NOT SO SURE, JOHNNY. IT SEEMS ALMOST SACRELIGIOUS.
OH - I DON'T THINK SO, DARLING. AND I DESIGNED THE ORIGINALS!
HMPH! AT LEAST TH' HOTSHOT AIN'T WEARIN' RED THIS TIME.

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ANATOMY OF A PHENOMENON:

John Byrne is the single most popular man involved in comic books today. If you add his name to the roster of credits on a book, be it as inker, writer, or penciller, a major increase can be expected in the sales of that book. If you list his name on the cover of a magazine, irregardless of the extent to which he is actually involved within the issue, again an increase in sales is to be expected. But is this devoted following deserved? Many comic book critics have questioned his contribution to the comic book field. Others have lauded his work in glowing terms. Several interviews covering brief aspects of his career have been presented but no real in-depth probing of Byrne as both a man and a creative force has previously been attempted.

In this interview, conducted June 2, 1983 we have attempted to reveal the entire man from childhood, through schooling, early work, middle period and current efforts in the four-color field. We have tried to show how the events have cumulatively combined to create the talent he is today. We have also tried to show how he has both influenced and been influenced by other craftsmen in the field. Finally, we have touched on Byrne's beliefs on where the field is headed and what can be accomplished within the medium. Plans for upcoming projects are also revealed. Read forward and step in to the inner workings of the phenomenon called Byrne

IN THE BEGINNING

CF: You do comic books for a living. Do you view yourself as a cartoonist, as an artist or as a writer?

Byrne: Cartoonist is a good generic word, I like cartoonist

CF: As a cartoonist primarily? Following in a tradition of newspaper strips and political cartoons?

Byrne: I think so. Yes, as a storyteller.

CF: Were you always interested in storytelling?

Byrne: You mean, have I always been a liar? I think so, yes. I can remember making up my own comic stories about as far back as I can remember. Drawing little figures... .

CF: What kind of strips were they? Adventure strips?

Byrne: Adventure strips eventually. The first adventure strip I can remember I was...junior high school... maybe thirteen, maybe somewhat younger than that. A thing called Matter Man which was very close to Metamorpho who had not yet appeared.

DF: So they stole your ideas... .

Byrne: I have a great tradition, a great history of coming up with brilliant ideas just before they appear in comic books or television. I created the **Flintstones** about a week before they showed up on TV.

CF: When you created the strip, did you show it to anybody or was it just for yourself?

Byrne: Just friends. It was the usual thirteen year old...

CF: What reaction did you get?

Byrne: Most people liked it. Most people were very kind.

CF: Was that what encouraged you to continue?

Byrne: Not really, no. I kind of drifted away from it. From when I turned 15 until 20 I sort of went off and discovered girls and things like that.

CF: You felt you had to give up comics to discover girls?

Byrne: Yeah, it was a direct trade.

CF: Now that you're back in comics does that mean you've traded back?

[laughter]

Byrne: Now that I'm married, its OK. I've convinced my wife its not nearly as perverse as it appeared to be. Plus the fact that she had a fifteen year old son who was reading comics. That softened the blow.

CF: Had he read any of your comics before you met him?

Byrne: Oh yes. I was his big hero then.

CF: There must have been quite a reaction then.

Byrne: Oh yes. I've often wondered what my reaction would have been when I was fifteen if my mother had come home and said, "I'm going to marry Jack Kirby." It would have been a bit of a shock—especially to my father.

CF: Where were you born?

Byrne: I spent about the first eight years in England.

CF: Where?

Byrne: Well, lets see. The closest big city was Birmingham. The actual place was West Bromwich.

CF: That was what-basically coal country?

Byrne: The Black Country as its called.

CF: Was your family in mining?

Byrne: No, my paternal grandfather worked in a factory...in a boiler factory. And my father was a carpenter's apprentice who eventually became a town planner. City engineer.

CF: Was that what convinced you not to go into working for a living?

Byrne: Probably.

CF: What was their reaction to your final career decision?

Byrne: It took my father a while. He called me a commercial artist for the longest time. I couldn't quite convince him that it wasn't exactly commercial art. Until I did **Spiderman**, then he knew what I was doing. It kind of locked in while I was doing **Spiderman.** Then he used the word cartoonist, and he was able to accept what I do..

CF: Isn't a cartoonist who is producing illustrations to sell a publication sort of working in a subdivision of commercial art?

Byrne: I think its sideways of commercial art. When I think commercial art, I think cars and trucks and detergent boxes. Some of the best artists in America today are commercial artists.

CF: Isn't commercial art really a field that is designed to sell something, whether its a publication or something else, which is indeed what comic books do do. As opposed to fine art.

Byrne: Its not storytelling. Its not storytelling in the same way. Its one of those funny things.

CF: What do you call a Hostess Twinkie ad that appears in a comic?

Byrne: I don't call it a comic strip by any stretch of the imagination. I call it...I think the Hostess Twinkie ad is better then anything to define the difference between commercial art and comic books. Those are done by commercial artists and commercial writers. I remember when I did my Hostess ad, it was a Hulk ad. I did it

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(I have) a great history of coming up with brilliant ideas just before they appear in comics or television. I created the Flintstones about a week before they showed up on TV.

sitting in Roger Stern's office and Roger Stern was writing the Hulk at the time. Roger rewrote the Hulk's dialogue because he wanted it to be accurate. The traditional dialogue in the Hostess ad has the Hulk talking like Superbaby instead of like the Hulk: "Me will smash now."

CF: That has been the case in the **Hulk** book from time to time too....

Byrne: Even Marvel gets it wrong every once in a while. We have a slightly higher batting average than the Twinkie ads.

CF: You moved from England over to Canada? Calgary or thereabouts?

Byrne: Edmonton originally, which is north of Calgary and then finally Calgary when I was sixteen.

CF: Then your first observation of real power was probably the stampede?

Byrne: You might say that, I suppose. It was my first observation of people torturing horses.

CF: At that point in your early youth, were there Canadian comics or were you only exposed to American comics?

Byrne: American and English. The English stuff was sent to me, but to the best of my knowledge there were no Canadian comics. The war had been over for a while and that was the only time Canadian comics really flourished.

CF: With a couple of sporadic instances since.

Byrne: There has been **Captain Canuck** since then, but that's been quite a since...a thirty year since.

CF: Which English strips were you exposed to?

Byrne: Mostly **Eagle. Eagle** gave us Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future, Luck of the Legion, Storm King, all the true-blue, stiff-upper-lip adventure strips.

CF: Who was doing the work then? Hampton and Bellamy?

Byrne: I came in just on the end of Hampton. I came in the middle of the transition between Hampton and Frank Bellamy. I was there from Bellamy up through Cornwell and Harley, and whoever took over after that when **Eagle** really started to go downhill.

CF: I noticed that Hampton and Bellamy's art style are really not emulated by anyone in comics in America today.

Byrne: No, not at all. You do see some Bellamy clones in the English work, but you don't see anything like that over here.

CF: Do you think there's any particular reason for that? Its a very attractive illustrative style.

Byrne: It's quite possible that the kids who come in imitating somebody haven't seen any Bellamy. I started out imitating Bellamy, but when I discovered Neal Adams, the Bellamy went away entirely. I discovered John Buscema and the Adams went away.

CF: When you look at Hampton and Bellamy and you look at things like **High Command** and **Road to Courage** they are very effective. Even now, they are very effective.

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Byrne: There are still elements of Hampton and Bellamy that come through in my stuff. Especially in my renderings of the insides of machines. I drew a spaceship with the hatch open and I put my Bellamy hat on. For the most part, that particular style is the style of an age. We simply don't perceive the world like that anymore, which is a sad thing really. It's a nice simple, clean style. If we started drawing, for example, the standard Frank Hampton spaceship, which is quite simply a cigar shape with fins, people would laugh at us. Spaceships have gunk all over them. They look like something you picked up at a garage sale.

CF: Of course when they did a tank they were a bit better. Which American comics were the first ones that caught your interest?

Byrne: The very first exposure was Superman. Very quickly followed by Batman, Superboy and Johnny Quick. When we came over to Canada I very quickly picked up on the American publications. I lost Johnny Quick, I only read one Johnny Quick story. I locked into Batman, and Superman and Superboy, all of what was to become the Superman family books. Of course there weren't any Batman family books in those days.

CF: The Johnny Quick story must have appeared many years before, in America?

Byrne: I guess so, it was a funny little book that I picked up in a market near where we lived and it had three stories in it. It had a Batman story, a Superboy story and a Johnny Quick story, and I bought it for the Superboy

Superman is the primal super-power character and Batman is almost the primal non-super-power character

story, knowing it was the only one I could relate to, knowing Superman. It said "The adventures of Superman as a boy" and I said, "Ok." The one that stuck most clearly in my mind was the Batman story. I just fell into that one, it was great.

CF: You went on to do episodes of both of those characters.

Byrne: Batman; I never did Superman.

CF: Didn't you? I thought I'd seen a John Byrne Superman? Oh, it's in that **Art of Byrne** book.

Byrne: Yes. you've seen a lot of drawings of Superman by John Byrne, but you've never seen a John Byrne Superman story.

CF: He is quite an interesting character. As a matter of fact both of them seem to be the primal character....

Byrne: They are. Superman is the primal super-power character and Batman is almost the primal non-super-power character. Actually he is usurped from that title by the Phantom. The Phantom preceded him.

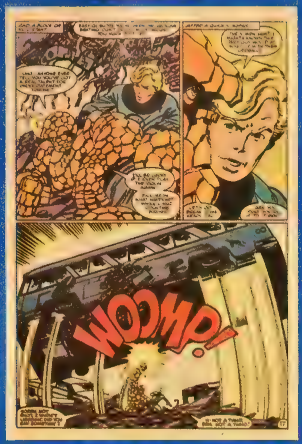
CF: Yes, but in a very different milieu than we're used to.

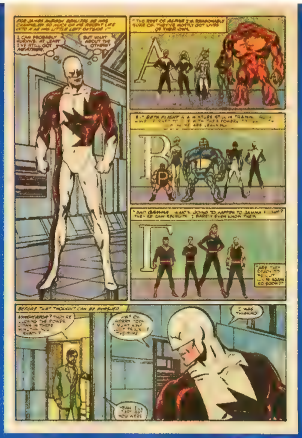
Byrne: But it is still the basic guy with no powers wearing a mask and punching people out.

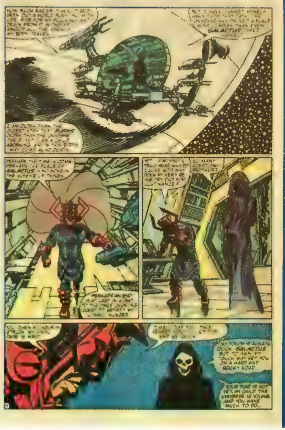
CF: You just darken the purple and you get the Batman. You've actually written quite a bit and discussed quite a big on the Superman character as far as where his powers do come from and exactly what powers he does have. Do you want to elaborate on that?

Byrne: Boy that would be opening such a can of worms. The only thing I've really gotten into is applying the Marvel logic to Superman. We start with being willing to stretch disbelief that a character can do such and such a thing, but then we try to come

NO!!
WHY!! WHY!!
I KNOW JUST I WILL NOT DIE!
AND I WAS SURE I'D FOUND SOMETHING THAT WOULD BE PROOF AGAINST HIS POWERS!
BUT IT WASN'T ENOUGH!
AGH!
UGH!


AND A BLOCK OF STONE!
BUT I DO BELIEVE THAT WILL DO THE TRICK!
AT LEAST FOR A COUPLE OF MINUTES!
I'VE ACCIDENTALLY FOUND THE ONLY SUBSTANCE THAT CAN HURT HIM!
AND I'M GOING TO USE IT!
WOOMP!





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up with a logic as to why they can do it. Since Superman seems to be able to do all manner of things that defy physical laws as we understand them and since I don't accept the Marvel rule that physical laws are different in the DC universe, I just look at it and say, "Well, There must be some kind of psionic power here." Because if you pick up a building by one corner, the building will fall apart unless you are somehow physically or mentally holding it together.

CF: Of course Superman makes a practice of flying through the air and catching people.

Byrne: And all sorts of fun stuff. I really wouldn't want to be caught by Superman if he's as hard as we reckon.

CF: Sort of the "Gwen Stacy Syndrome"..[Gwen Stacy, Spiderman's former fiance, was caught in midair...the impact killing her.]

Byrne: Exactly. I remember doing a sequence in Iron Fist where the X-Men appeared—my audition for the X-Men—and Wolverine fell out of the window. Chris wanted to have Colossus catch him and I said I can't see being caught by Colossus as being appreciably better than landing on concrete.

CF: Is metal preferable to concrete? I don't know.

Byrne: Which would you rather get hit by: 400 pounds of steel or 400 pounds of cement, I don't know.

CF: And that complicated by the fact that his adamantium bones should rip through his own skin.

Byrne: Exactly. Thats where we sort of look the other way.

CF: When did you begin reading Marvel Comics?

Byrne: I began reading Marvel Comics with **Fantastic Four #5**. That's the first one that I clearly identified as a Marvel comic. I had seen some of the Stan Lee/Jack Kirby monster stuff—Stan Lee/Steve Ditko weird stuff—but I had not really identified as being by the people who eventually came out with the **Fantastic Four.** As a matter of fact, I had seen an issue of the **Fantastic Four** before then....think it was #2 but I hadn't really tied it down as anything out of the ordinary until #5.

CF: What appealed to you about the book?

Byrne: I've tried a lot of times to put that into words and its really such a gut reaction kind of thing. It just felt so different to read, to have these characters...

The essence of the **Fantastic Four** is the essence of the Marvel Universe. These are real people who just happen to have superpowers, as opposed to superpowered people who are trying to be real. It has always been important to the Fantastic Four and to the rest of the Marvel Universe that human emotion be more important than the ability to lift a building. The Super is less important than the man, in the Marvel Universe.

CF: Hasn't there been something of a problem though, with the overplay of that in that it appears to be someone going through the motions as opposed to real feelings.

Byrne: Of course, that's been a major problem with Marvel for the last ten years, probably longer. The non-formula of Marvel became a formula. So we have endless unwritten rules. That you can do this and you can't do that. It's only been since the advent of Jim Shooter as Editor-In-Chief that we've really seen any destruction of that myth. Shooter just opened it up and said, "Hey, there are no rules, the only rules are that you have to do good comics. If that means, for example, doing an issue, where the heroes don't appear at all, than you do that." As I just did. Ten years ago...five years ago, that wouldn't have happened. Five years ago or ten years ago when I first started, if I had gone in and said, "I want to do an issue of the Fantastic Four where the Fantastic Four do not appear at all" I would have gotten so much flack. I would have got, "No. No, they have to be on the splash page and they have to be using their powers. Even if it's robots being fought by Dr. Doom, they have to be there." The revolution that has occured at Marvel in the Shooter Days has been absolutely incredible.

CF: Of course,the biggest problem it seems in comics today is the contraction of time.

Byrne: I don't perceive that as a problem. I know that some of the hard core fans perceive it as a problem. I think that is one of the cases where you have to grab people around the neck and say, "These are comic books. If you don't like it then its time to go read **Playboy** or something."

CF: For instance when you have Superman meet Jack Kennedy.... .

Byrne: Right. And now you will have Superbaby meet Jack Kennedy, its just one of those things that you have to ignore. It's like fins on cars and seams in stockings. They're there and they come and they go. I've just done a "street" issue of the **Fantastic Four** and I've put some basic "punk" types in and five years from now that will be glaringly out of date. And one will just have to ignore that, because the story doesn't require the contemporary element, only the hook into reality requires it.

Those are topical references to make it more real to the reader.

CF: Did reading comics trigger your writing stories or were you doing that before then?

Byrne: I think its a 50-50 process. I was inventing stuff without really knowing what to do with it. Then I discovered comics and they showed me what to do with it. So you could say that I had the imitative ability and I didn't have anything to do with it until I discovered comic books, and then I started imitating like crazy.

CF: Were there any particular artists

The essence of the Fantastic Four is the essence of the Marvel Universe.

at that time who really grabbed your eye? Sort of fixed your attention?

Byrne: I can remember swiping whoever was Bob Kane in those days a lot.

CF: Whoever was using that DC house name.

Byrne: That probably would have been Jerry Robinson. I can remember copying that particular style a great deal. I was also a big fan of Jim Mooney in those days. I used to copy his Supergirl a lot as I was growing up. Beyond that there was no major American artist who was really a major focus to my style until I encountered Kirby. This is the very early Kirby of course, this is the Kirby of the early Fantastic Four and the Hulk. We've got Dick Ayers and Chic Stone inks so it couldn't look a whole lot like the current Kirby and the middle period.

CF: Were you also reading comic strips or just comic books?

Byrne: I was reading comic strips. I was reading newspaper strips. You have to understand, being up in Canada, we didn't have a lot of access to comic strips. The comic strips I grew up with was like one column down one side of one page. It couldn't have been more. In those days they were fairly big so it couldn't have been more than 10 or 12 strips. I can remember **Little Abner** and I can remember **Dick Tracy.**

CF: Any **Flash Gordon**...

Byrne: No, no **Flash Gordon** at all. I remember some **Steven Canyon**, so we must have gotten that.

CF: You were exposed to Milton Caniff.

Byrne: I can remember when we first came over from England. I can remember one of the first strips I encountered was **Skymasters**, which of course, was Kirby and Wood!

CF: That was very nice stuff too

Byrne: I didn't know who it was in those days...I couldn't even read it.

CF: Just looked at the art.

Byrne: I didn't know what the words were but boy it looked pretty.

CF: When you were in high school, what did you plan to be when you got out into the world?

Byrne: When I was a little kid I wanted to be a palientologist just like Walt Simonson. Then I went through a period where I was going to be a doctor. Then I went through a period where I was going to be purely a writer. Eventually, I sort of fell into comics more or less accidentally. I hardly gave any serious thought to becoming a comic artist until about five minutes before it happened. I can't say that I planned to become a comic artist, but I can say that doing it is the closest thing to a childhood dream come true without ever having crystalized the dream.

CF: Palientology would prepare you for that.

Byrne: Well, big monsters...

CF: It's amazing how many people in comics and about comics are interested in palientology—Dinosaurs, geology and so on. There seems to be a very high interest level.

Byrne: I think it's the mystery.

CF: We can never really know what dinosaurs were like.

Byrne: That's right. Not until we build ourselves a time machine and I'm not going to ride that sucker.

CF: Depending on who you read, that may or may not be physically possible.

Byrne: I'm of the opinion that time travel is physically impossible but that doesn't stop me from making references to it.

CF: It's still fun to have to toss around. What was your major in college?

Byrne: I majored in Fine Arts. Fine Arts painting as a matter of fact, which is a very dumb thing for a....

CF: By then you were no longer planning on being a writer.

Byrne: No, by then I had pretty much decided that art was my chief forte. I was still kind of nurturing the idea that

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I was the one who would make up the stories. I've really been inclined to think of myself as a writer who draws rather than an artist who writes.

CF: And yet you majored in Fine Arts?

Byrne: Yes. There weren't any writing courses that one could major in. I didn't have the paper to go to universities. The college I went to was a separate, distinct organism unto itself. It was not an university. You just needed a high school diploma to get in.

CF: When you went there and took courses in Fine Arts, did you study any particular periods?

Byrne: Just about everything they laid on us.

CF: The overview.

Byrne: It was the usual general bolderized art college course of everything from cave painting to whoever is dripping paint on canvas this week.

CF: Did any particular fine artist, or painter or sculptor draw your attention?

Byrne: So to speak? I was always drawn by the big guns of the classical period. The Michaelangelos, the Leonardos, the Raphaels... They never covered the latest, popular artists. I would go into a college and say, "Well what do you think of Syd Mead?" And they would go, "Huh" I was kind of off investigating myself, you know the comic influence.

CF: So does John Byrne think that Michaelangelo deserves his reputation?

Byrne: John Byrne thinks that Michaelangelo deserves his reputation. John Byrne thinks that Michaelangelo is a hell of an artist. I think he was a tremendous artist.

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CF: But could he have done good comics?

Byrne: I think he would have done spectacular comics. I don't think he would have necessarily been in comics, if Michaelangelo were alive today, I don't know whether he would be a Frazetta type, its hard to say. I know I can reasonably say Leonardo probably wouldn't be. Leonardo would probably be off experimenting with electronic art. He was the ultimate experimentor.

CF: Leonardo was always at the cutting edge of technology it seems.

Byrne: Yes, he was always one step ahead. Michaelangelo never thought of himself as a painter, of course, he thought of himself as a sculptor. So god knows what he'd be doing today; building spaceships for Lucas.

CF: That **would** be interesting. After you got out of college, what was the first occupation you followed. Was it comics?

Byrne: No. Immediately after college I worked as a designer for an outdoor advertising company. I designed billboards. I didn't actually paint them or anything but I designed them. It was kind of visual storytelling. Professional liar.

CF: And then someone else took that and put it on a grid....

Byrne: Blew it up, yeah. Made it big.

THERE WAS WHEELIE AND THE CHOPPER BUNCH

CF: How does one get from designing billboards to drawing comics?

Byrne: Actually one doesn't get from designing billboards to drawing comics, one gets from doing a comic book as the end-of-the-year project in first year college to drawing comics. I did a forty page book called **The Death Head Night** and a guy who lived in Calgary who had some contact with American fandom saw it, got my number from the school, called me up and asked, "How would you like to go to New York and meet these people?" This was the first time it really clicked that this was a potential profession. I went down to New York when I was 21, that was 12 years ago, and met a bunch of people who basically told me what I was doing wrong and said, "Come back when you're good." So I went back and sort of hammered away at it for about another four years. Then finally in '74 I made my first professional sale.

CF: Was that to Charlton?

Byrne: No. Actually that was to Marvel. The first one was actually to Marvel. The eight-page "Dark Asylum" story that appeared in **Giant-Sized Dracula.** My second professional sale was "Rog 2000" which appeared first. Marvel bought me my first pair of shoes, as they always like to remind me.

CF: They weren't ready to buy your material on a regular basis?

Byrne: No. That was really a bad time for Marvel. If you didn't draw like Jack Kirby or Neal Adams they weren't interested. That was the time when Rich Buckler was doing the Fantastic Four. Neal [Adams] was doing the Avengers. I liked Rich's stuff in the early days...There are a lot of people who came in who's stuff I really liked and who seemed to go sideways from where they were. I'm not going to pass judgement on whether its good or not, it just doesn't appeal to me.

CF: Then you went over to Charlton and did **Wheelie and The Chopper Bunch** which was probably some of your best work. Have you any interest in drawing humorous work of that type again?

Byrne: No. Wheelie was a lot of fun, but I would have had more fun with it if they had let me do what I wanted to do with it. Being handed a job like that I was at first put off. This isn't superheroes, this is silly stuff. Then I thought about it and thought, "No this is my opportunity to become Carl Barks of Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch." So I went absolutely snake on the first issue and Hanna/Barbera said, "No, don't do this. This is too much. This will scare the kids." That kind of knocked the props out from under me.

CF: What had you actually done?

Byrne: I put a lot of shall we say personality into the supporting cast. We had one car that was a demolition derby car and one that was a drag racer and I put as much into them as I could. The Hanna/Barbera judgement was that it was too scarey for what I guess they presumed was their market.

CF: What exactly was scarey about what you did?

Byrne: Beats me. If I had known it was scarey I wouldn't have done it. I didn't think it was scarey. I was thinking very much in terms of what I'd read growing up in England, with talking cars and things. I had never considered that scarey as a kid. Hanna/Barbera obviously had different standards.

CF: They probably would have thought My Mother The Car was scarey.

Byrne: Well it was. I used to have nightmares watching that. Every time Avery Schreider was on, I used to hide behind the couch.

CF: After you worked for Charlton for a while you went back to Marvel?

Byrne: What happened was work more-or-less dried up at Charlton. I had done the first issue of **Emergency** and I didn't want to continue with it. **Doomsday Plus One** had been cancelled. **Space 1999**, I made the mistake of watching the show. Having watched the show on a regular basis, I lost interest in doing the comic strip. So I wasn't really doing anything.

CF: That was pretty early in your career. You were involved in doing media adaptations.

Byrne: Almost from the start. At one time Charlton had a big contract cooking with Universal and I was going to do the comic book adaptation of **Jaws**, which never materialised. I looked forward to that one.

CF: In these media adaptations, were you actually drawing without having

seen them?

Byrne: Only **Wheelie and The Chopper Bunch.** I...had I seen **Space 1999** by the time I'd done it... I think...I had a ton of reference on it... and I think I had actually seen the show by the time I got around to doing the book because I picked it up with issue three. I am reasonably sure I'd seen the show. **Wheelie and the Chopper Bunch** I never saw.

CF: I have to admit I didn't follow that, that closely. I followed Wheelie and that was the only one.

Byrne: I guess a lot of people didn't follow it and I guess that's why it went away.

CF: But Wheelie was fun. It really was. **Doomsday Plus One** seemed to have a lot of potential.

Byrne: That was also the first strip on which I really got to stretch my writing wings because they more or less gave me carte blanche to play editor. I guess Joe Gill, who was the writer of the book, was practically writing everything Charlton put out at the time and he told me to go ahead and change anything I wanted to in the stories because when you're writing fifteen thousand books a month you have trouble keeping track of who's who in each book. It kind of fell to me to make sure that all the characters stayed in character from issue to issue. Eventually I sort of got power mad and started messing around with the storyline.

CF: That was getting fairly interesting. The last story actually wound up in **Charlton Bullseye,** didn't it?

Byrne: There was a story that appeared in **Charlton Bullseye**. There was a final story that I had plotted but wasn't given sufficient warning. I told them if they gave me enough warning I could actually do two last stories which would finish the series. But it was just cancelled. The next-to-last issue went in the **Charlton Bullseye** and the last issue was never done.

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CF: That was unfortunate. Did Charlton pay similar rates as other companies at the time?

Byrne: Oh no, no. At Charlton, I very quickly went to their top rate and I was getting $50 a page for pencils, inks and lettering. Now, I get almost that much for scripting.

CF: Of course, then Marvel wasn't paying quite as much either. And you weren't John Byrne yet either.

Byrne: I wasn't John Byrne yet. At that time I went from Charlton's top rate for pencils of $27 a page to Marvel's bottom rate of $35.

CF: Their bottom was better...

Byrne: Yes, but it wasn't all money in those days. It was a lot of fun working at Charlton. I enjoyed my year-and-a-half at Charlton.

CF: Were you working from a full script presentation?

Byrne: Full script in those days. And I would, in most cases, treat the script as a plot and break it down and redialogue it. I totally redialogued **Doomsday Plus One** from about issue four and I redialogued a couple of issues here and there of **Space 1999** and entirely scripted my last issue of **Space 1999.**

I had a lot of freedom at Charlton, I almost can't say I worked with an editor at Charlton, because they would hand me a script and say play with it and I would do things with it.

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AND THE IRON FIST OF MARVEL

CF: Then you went over to Marvel. Was **Iron Fist** the first?

Byrne: Iron Fist was the first full time job at Marvel. When Shooter was persuading me to jump he said he'd give me all the work I'd need. I was actually doing **Iron Fist** and **Space 1999** at the same time, I did "Tigra" somewhere in there. But Shooter was Editor-In-Chief or Editor-Supreme or whatever he was in those days. He wasn't Editor-in-Chief yet. He just said come and work for us 100 percent, full time and we'll give you all the work you can handle. By golly, he did.

CF: Shooter then is the one who lured you over to Marvel. Who bought your first script over there?

Byrne: Tony Isabella, Tony Isabella was the editor who assigned "Dark Asylum" to me.

CF: When you went on to **Iron Fist** that was directly from Shooter?

Byrne: No, I don't think that was Shooter yet. I think Shooter assigned me a couple issues of **Marvel Team Up.** So anybody who is up on the career of John Byrne can figure it out, the first official Shooter intervention was getting me my first issue of **Marvel Team-Up.**

CF: You worked on **Iron Fist** for quite a few issues, didn't you?

Byrne: Fifteen issues. Fifteen issues and then his last issue in **Marvel Premier** so sixteen altogether.

CF: Why do you think the character has never achieved any real popularity?

Byrne: I think **Iron Fist** was cursed by being the second kung-fu book.

CF: The second place to **Master of Kung-Fu?**

Byrne: Plus he was a kind of funny superhero generic kung-fu, cross-over thing that nobody could quite figure out what he was, whether he was kung-fu or whether he was superhero. Its a shame **Iron Fist** didn't pick up Doug Moench and Paul Gulacy because he's really a better character then say Shang Chi and we wouldn't have had to pay all sorts of money to the estate of Sax Rhomar.

CF: Did they pay royalty on that?

Byrne: They sure did.

CF: I was never really sure if those characters had become public domain by now.

Byrne: Oh no, no Sax Rhomer's estate is still out there.

CF: Around that period of time you started **Champions,** right?

Byrne: Somewhere in there. I got **Champions** because they couldn't give me the **X-Men**. Archie Goodwin was Editor-In-Chief then, and he assigned me to the **Champions.** I guess I was still doing **Iron Fist**.

CF: Who was writing **The Champions?**

Byrne: Bill Mantlo.

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CF: That was in his first period at Marvel?

Byrne: I guess so. That was very early Bill and that was very early me. You could tell by looking at those books that neither of us really knew what we were doing.

CF: Which is probably why the team is one of the few teams not to make it.

Byrne: It was also a bunch of losers. Really the only one in the whole book who had any interest for me was the Black Widow.

CF: It's unfortunate that Hercules couldn't have been developed.

Byrne: I think Hercules could be a great character yet I don't think anybody has yet figured out what to do with him. He suffers the same comparison to Thor as Iron Fist suffered to Shang Chi.

CF: Both being gods and he having emerged from the **Thor** strip as well.

Byrne: Yes. He will always be our second mythological character.

CF: When you were doing the **Champions,** did you get any chance to have any writing input on the series?

Byrne: No. Not at all. My heavy plotting input didn't start to happen... really not until the **X-Men**. You can really judge it from when I started

I can't say that I planned to become a comic artist, but I can say that doing it is the closest thing to a childhood dream come true...

demanding coplotter credit. I've always had a big campaign for credit where credit is due which also works the other way—no credit where no credit is due. If I didn't feel I really deserved the credit for something I wouldn't ask for it.

CF: I though that you had actually written something before that though.

Byrne: Not that I can remember, let me think now. I wrote a couple of two page things that appeared in the **Monster Times.**

CF: When you were working on **Iron Fist**, were you working from plots or from full scripts?

Byrne: The first three (that is to say **Marvel Premier #25** and issues #1 and #2 of **Iron Fist**) were full script and issue #3 was my first story ever done from the plot. You can really tell if you look at it. I just went nuts, breaking down everything. There's one page in there I remember that has sixteen panels on it. Which I think is a bit much especially in these days when I don't get to do more than five. I really only did three stories from full script. Four if you count "Dark Asylum", but three books.

CF: It's funny. You admired Jack Kirby when you went into comics and his habit is to put one panel per page and you put sixteen.

Byrne: It was also the days when Buckler was having the big influence when he was doing the **Deathlok** stuff and every single action was broken down. We all got the impression that when people said story telling that was what they meant. It meant that you had to have every single action. Now I look at a panel and think, "No, you don't need a panel showing this guy moving from here to here—you just need a panel showing him here, then one showing him there. Or one showing him starting to cross and in some cases not even that. That's where you use the words."

CF: The words and pictures have to work together. Do you find any problem with the artists that use the medium in a very illustrative way?

Byrne: Well no, I have no problem with the style. Everybody has his own way of drawing. My only problem with what I would define as an illustrative style is when the pictures are simply illustrating what it says in the words. When it says in the caption, "Captain Fuzbain stands in front of the president's desk" and in the picture Captain Fuzbain is standing in front of the president's desk, that is when it is simply illustrated to me, and not storytelling.

CF: What about when each panel is basically a still life painting?

Byrne: I have no problem with that. That's just a style. As long as its not defeating the basic objective which is to tell a story. I mean, look at Richard Corben's stuff. Every panel of that is a painting and the story flows and there's no wasted material.

CF: Its a very different technique than say Steve Ditko portraying motion in **Spiderman.**

Byrne: Of course, but we've never seen Ditko paint anything before. If Ditko did a graphic novel it might be incredible to behold. We'd all probably learn something, I'm quite sure.

CF: When you came into comics, other than Rich Buckler, in that period of your career who did you look on as influential?

Byrne: At that period, I think everyone who was there was influential.

CF: Everyone..you were new.

Byrne: Yes, I've always described myself as a sponge. I pick up on anything that works so that even people who have come after me—such as Frank Miller—I pick up on stuff he's done—Mike Golden I've picked up on stuff he's done. These are guys who have come into the business since me. Not to speak of myself in the past tense.

CF: This is now the industry where

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people are trying to remember who Neal Adams was.

Byrne: One could always get Neal by saying, if he was in hearing, "Hey remember Neal?"

CF: That was an incredible experience, in fact, when **Ms. Mystic** came out I was talking to people who had seen the book but did not know who Neal Adams was because he had been out of comics for so long. [Neal Adams hasn't drawn comics for the past ten years.]

Byrne: If you don't do comics on a regular basis, the kids forget you so fast. This is one of the things my fellow professionals don't seem to realise. Even with the phenomenal fan market out there there is still a remarkable turnover. Every year you are losing a big number of kids and every year a new group, hopefully as big as the one that left, are coming in. Every month, every issue is a first issue for somebody. If you haven't done comics for five or six years, they don't know you. I was up in Toronto a couple of years ago and a kid asked me who my favorite artist was and I said Bernie Wrightson and the kid said, "Who?" and I damn near tore his throat out. You know, "How dare you say Who?!!" But he didn't know and then I realised Bernie doesn't do anything. He does **National Lampoon** once in a while but that's not comics to these kids.

CF: And how many people realise that Bernie is very heavily derivative of Graham Ingels?

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I had a lot of freedom at Charlton...they would hand me a script and say play with it...

Byrne: Who they've probably never heard of either.

CF: Certainly if they haven't heard of Bernie Wrightson they haven't heard of Graham Ingels.

Byrne: They haven't heard of a lot of people. I've encountered people who haven't heard of me and I work on a regular basis. You know kids who come in and say, "Yeah, I read comics all the time. Who are you?" and I say I'm John Byrne and they don't know who I am.

THE X-MEN... THE PHENOMENON BEGINS

CF: Thats surprising because you do appear as much as you do. After you went through the early period you obviously went on to middle John Byrne, the **X-Men** period of your career.

Byrne: My, I hope we're still talking early John Byrne. The early period? It's only been 10 years. Yes. **X-Men**—well **X-Men** is really the beginning of John Byrne. I think, if we want to take John Byrne and consider him as a phenomenon, it starts with the **X—Men.**

CF: You went on the **X-Men** at a point when they already were established and in place.

Byrne: Well, they'd been around...Let's see, I took over with #108. It was a bimonthly book, fourteen issues, so that's two-three years that they'd been running when I finally took it over.

CF: And yet, whenever anyone thinks of the X-Men, even the early X-Men, they think of John Byrne. What did you do when you came on that so identified everyone's image of the book with you?

Byrne: I think what happened...I don't think its entirely me for a start. I think its the Byrne—[Terry]Austin **X-Men** that people remember. I also think that its less a case of anything I did, rather its almost like a relay race and Cockrum had started the race and he got it going and it was going strong and well underway. It was rolling. It was already a cult book. Then it was handed on to me and whatever the magic that Terry and I had, that Chris and I had, it just took that rolling thing that Cockrum had started, and continued with it, it just kept going. The **X-Men** is one of those overnight successes that took eight years to really crystalize. Up until the time that I left the book, Shooter was still saying its only selling this, its only selling that, it could sell better. It was nowhere near the number one book when I left it... It became the number one book when Cockrum returned. So obviously Dave was doing something right.

CF: That's odd because when people collect the back issues its the Byrne issues they collect.

Byrne: I think its the characters myself. I've always said that. When you look at the way the books in which those characters have appeared sell, even when they are done by people who the fans have no respect for. The fans have no respect for Sal Buscema even though he's a fantastic artist....

CF: Although Sal Buscema by the same token is one of the better-selling artists in comics when you put him on a book.

Byrne: Well the books certainly don't suffer when Sal goes on but the fans don't rave about them. You never see interviews....

CF: You don't see the fan press raving about Sal Buscema but you certainly see the fan buyer buying a book when he's on it.

Byrne: Oh, of course. The kids don't make the association that Sal does all the big, good, solid-selling books. Nobody will make the association that it might be because Sal is doing it. I like them. This is one of the things that keeps me humble. The kids come up to me and they say, "Mr. Byrne, I love your stuff, but I hate..."and they list all the people that I love. Sal Buscema, Steve Ditko, Don Heck, Jack Kirby, Joe Kubert, Jerry Robinson, and I'm sitting here thinking if those guys weren't in the business I

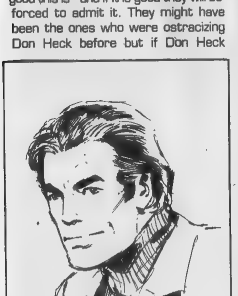
wouldn't be able to draw. You know, you love my stuff but you hate them? What's the matter with you people?

CF: The reason I question this is because the **Justice League** sold better under Heck than they did under Perez. The **X-Men** sold better when Heck took it over and Neal Adams left. Things like that make you wonder. I mean, if Neal Adams can leave a book and Don Heck comes on and it sells better, or George Perez can leave a book and he comes on and it sells better, something isn't equating. Somebody is buying differently than they are talking.

Byrne: That's when we have to get into that range where we are not talking about fans. That's when we're talking about your Joe Blow kid who goes into a drug store and buys comic books, who'll buy comic books for about five years and then he'll stop.

CF: But even in the comic shops the **Justice League** sold better under Heck.

Byrne: I don't doubt it. Don did some of the best work he's ever done on the Justice League, especially with Romeo [Tanghal] inking. The one thing about fans-if you hit them over the head with it they will actually admit they like it. If you say, "Well look how good this is" and if it is good they will be forced to admit it. They might have been the ones who were ostracizing Don Heck before but if Don Heck produces something good, something that they cannot deny is good stuff, then they will accept it.



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CF: I think his early Iron Man was tremendous.

Byrne: Oh, Iron Man was gorgeous. The very first Iron Man story is a thing of beauty and a joy forever. I think every comic book fan should have to memorize that.

CF: I think its your real stylists, your Jerry Grandenettis and Don Hecks, Frank Robbins and Joe Kuberts that really add something to the industry. Not the artist that looks real smooth and flat and placid.

Byrne: And yet, the ones who do the most realistic work are the ones that tend to stray away from what I think comics are all about. Comics are a language unto themselves. And I really cannot altogether identify with the realism.

CF: Comics are a shorthand language and that's called Kirby.

Byrne: Yeah, I don't think of myself as a particularly realistic artist. Which is why I enjoy doing comics.

CF: You're not. I think most of your work, and I mean this in the best sense, I think most of your work is in the footsteps of Steve Ditko rather than in the footsteps of—well I hate to say it but...

Byrne: The stylization, its a representational thing because for one thing a lot of these stories, a lot of these characters, don't work if you rendered them realistically.

CF: Not only that but until you can draw in holograms they're never going to be more than two dimensional.

Byrne: Certainly there are a few artists that take it as close as spitting distance from that.

CF: They can appear to be three-dimensional and symbolically represent more than two dimensions, but run your hand over it, it's still flat.

Byrne: But you still have people like Neal and Bill Sienkiewicz who will produce something so damn close to a photograph that you are going to wonder if they actually went out and took a picture of Moon Knight or...

CF: Certainly you can take a lot of Neal's stuff and you go back to

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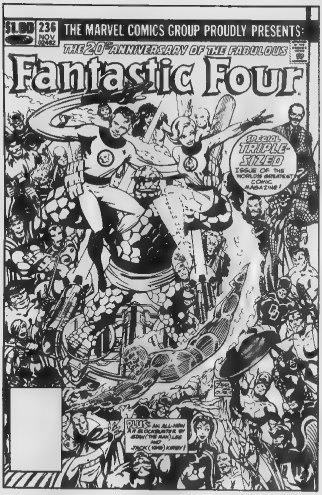
National Geographics and you learn why they're photographic. You find every leaf in the same place as in the photograph. I was disillusioned when somebody showed me a Batman splash page and it had camels—it was sort of a desert scene. You go back to an issue of **National Geographic** and the camels, the sand, the leaves on the trees, are exactly taken from the photograph.

Byrne: If you're going to get disillusioned from that you better stop reading the **FF**, that's all I can say. I'm starting to get into photographic backgrounds now..It's a step one takes to give a better product with a minimal amount of work.

CF: I guess its a short cut. That's funny, you mentioned the realistic versus the more stylistic artist and it reminds me of something Leonard Starr [the artist/writer of "On Stage" and "Annie"] told me the other day. That back when he was starting out there was Noel Sickles and on the other hand there was Alex Raymond. Alex Raymond was very smooth, very realistic while Sickles had these representational tricks that he used. More people were following Sickles because it was a trick you could learn rather than have to be perfect about anatomy. It sounds like this is the modern incarnation of that, isn't it?

Byrne: Oh yes. You can stylize anything you like, but you have to be true to your stylization. I think that's what a lot of kids don't realise. It's OK to stylize, its OK to be Kirby or Ditko

(Shooter)...said come and work for us...full time and we'll give you all the work you can handle. By golly, he did.



or Frank Robbins, as long as you remember you're being Kirby or Ditko or Robbins. What Jack does, it's always immediately recognizable as Jack, you don't see strange things popping up because he switched his style to do this particular element of the picture and the same is true of Ditko and Robbins.

CF: Isn't there a problem with a lot of the newer guys...Bill Sienkiewicz is just starting to get away from this, but a lot of the newer guys copying Neal Adams, who in turn largely learned his tricks from Stan Drake.

Byrne: This is a major problem. There are a lot of newer people coming in who are copying people who are copying other people, inbred fourth generation reality. I've seen people copying me and I say don't copy me because I don't have any sort of realistic grasp of the world around me. I've got an interpretive grasp of other people's work. I don't draw from life. Go draw from life. Don't draw from me. I remember talking to Sienkiewicz in San Diego once when I first met him because his work impressed me because he seemed to be the only Neal Adams clone to come along in recent years who could actually draw and wasn't just emulating Neal. I think the work Bill has gone on to do has proven that.

CF: I think one of the real problems with some of the others is that they'll be copying styles, copying the linework without knowing why they're copying the linework. In other words, they don't know why that line is there to begin with, they are just copying the fact that the line is there.

Byrne: There is also the important point that they tend to miss the point of what comics are all about, the clarity of the storytelling that comes from the people that they say are, oh boring, like Sal Buscema or Curt Swan. You have to know what is going on. The example that I always use to those coming in basing their work is Jim Starlin, drawing things like an extreme closeup of Warlock's left eyeball, but before that he'll give you a courtyard scene with 3000 people so you know exactly where that scene is taking place, you know where Warlock is, you know where his left eyeball is relative to everything else. The kids seem to skip that step, they go straight for the eyeball.

CF: I guess they're trying tricks to grab **your** eyeball.

Byrne: It's fine to use the tricks but you have to remember the basics that the tricks sit on top of.

CF: Who do you feel has added important new elements to comic story telling?

Byrne: Good question. I don't think anybody has added anything major to the storytelling since Eisner. Eisner played with the media probably more than anybody has before or since. I think Kirby is the absolute master of the comic book as an art object itself. Kirby is the one who defines what a comic book is. Its one of those things that you can't put into words. You have to say, "Here's a Kirby comic. Here's Kirby at his best. That's what a comic book is all about." But of recent vintage, I don't know, there have been people who have changed the look of comics, like Neal, but really nobody who's changed or influenced the way comics are done, the way they are told. I have images of Frank Miller reading this and coming after me and having a list of 25 people who have influenced comics. For myself, it kind of runs out around Eisner.

It's OK to stylize, it's OK to be Kirby or Ditko, or Frank Robbins, as long as you remember you're being Kirby or Ditko or Robbins.

CF: Then lets step back to the mid '30s when comics were first becoming comic books. Who do you think laid the milestones along that path, from there to Eisner?

Byrne: Gee, I wonder, its hard to say because I'm not an expert on that period.

CF: Do you think most of the comic book storytelling comes out of the strips and that's where the innovations have been? Even Eisner primarily worked for the newspapers.

Byrne: I think most of what has made comics, comics has happened in the last 20 years, because there was a lot of floundering around. When we talk about the Golden Age of Comics, we are actually talking about some of the worst comics produced. We're talking very much Bulletman stands in front of the president's desk, that sort of stuff, because they didn't know what they were doing then, they were doing illustrated stories. Here's the story, here's the picture.

CF: Of course there were exceptions.

Byrne: There were exceptions, yes. It's been the same with films. There was a great deal of floundering around trying to figure out what we were doing that wasn't the same as theater and with comics there was a floundering around trying to figure out the correct synthesis of words and pictures. Obviously comics and films run right along. You reach the point where the words and pictures have to compliment each other. Neither can exist without the other. That is the ideal situation right there. If you subtract the words you should be able to get some semblance of the story, but if you subtract the pictures and you won't get any sense at all. The words should supply the things that the pictures can't.

CF: I've also read the theory that neither should be able to stand on their own.

Byrne: I think the pictures should be able to stand on their own more than the words. Because it is a visual media you do see the pictures more than you see the words. But the words must be there to provide those elements that the pictures can't. The analogy that I always make is if the hero has been knocked out and carried into a room without windows and doors and he wakes up, first of all, you need...he's lying prone in the middle of the floor, you need the words to tell us whether or not he's conscious; you need the words to tell us whether its day or night, you need the words to tell us whether its hot or cold; there are all those things that we cannot generate in the picture. That's where the words come in, but Eisner makes a liar out of that. Eisner was a master of doing cold.

CF: Doing wet, his use of wind and water was just tremendous. Return our attention to the **X-Men**, you developed a lot of personality and character in a visual sense. It really emerged during your period. Did you have a particular plan in mind for what you wanted the characters to become or did they just grow or what?

Byrne: From reading the first fourteen or so issues, I felt I had a pretty good idea of who these people were and of all of them I felt Wolverine was the biggest sleeper of the bunch so I adopted him as my major character in the book, the one I was going to leave my signature on.

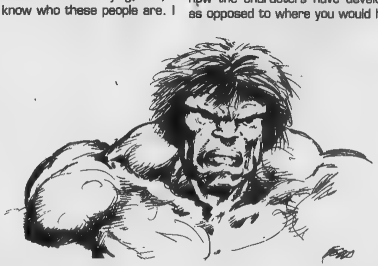
CF: Because he was the blankest slate to begin with?

Byrne: Yes, he was the blankest slate. That was just my approach, right from the start. Saying, OK, I think I know who these people are. I drew how I felt these people would react and when I became co-plotter on the book I came up with story lines and plots that I felt were natural outgrowths from who I felt those people were.

CF: For most of your tenure on the book, you and Chris Claremont worked fairly well together as a team. Yet, there were pressures that became really obvious near the end of your stint on the book. How did you work together?

Byrne: I think we worked fairly well together, I used to have what I called my "Argh Scale" which was how far I could get into a book before I found something I disagreed with, because naturally I wouldn't see the script. If I got fifteen pages into this one before I went "aargh," I would think it was a pretty good book. I think it was only in the last year or so that Chris was looking to take them in different directions then where I wanted to hold them pretty much where they were. I think the John Byrne influence has been most noticeable by its absence. The directions Chris has taken the characters is completely different. It can clearly be seen they are not the directions those characters were going when I was on the book. This is not a value judgement in any way. Chris isn't doing the wrong thing. If anybody wants to figure out what my contribution to the **X-Men** was all they have to do is look at what's happened since.

CF: What do you see as different in how the characters have developed as opposed to where you would have



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taken them?

Byrne: I feel so divorced from that book these days, it's almost hard to talk about it. I feel that there has been a homoginization of the characters. That there isn't even a distinction between how—the two biggest extremes I can think of is how Kitty would react to something and how Wolverine would react to something. The inference Chris seems to have laid on it is the X-Men react in a certain way to any given situation. The fact that they are X-Men affect how they react in a given way. The ultimate example of this is during the Brood saga, where Kitty was in an airlock on a Brood ship, and Nightcrawler was trapped outside, minutes from death. One of the Brood Sleezoids was between Kitty and the airlock activation thing and she hesitated for the longest moment, deciding whether she would kill this Sleezoid, which is what she would have to do in order to save Nightcrawler. For me, that's the point where the homoginization reached its ultimate extreme. "We are the X-Men and we don't kill."

CF: Wouldn't Wolverine have killed without a second thought though?

Byrne: I think Wolverine would have hesitated in that situation because Wolverine has been toned down a lot. It's been a long time since Wolverine has killed (outside the miniseries). It's one of those things where they have all turned into the same character.

CF: They've become more mellow.

Byrne: Yes, I work very hard to make sure that my characters don't become all the same character. I have a distinct advantage with **Fantastic Four**, though. Twenty years of history on the book. Roger Stern and I have often talked about what would have happened if the schism on the X-Men had gone the other way and Chris had left to write **Fantastic Four** and I had stayed on **The X-Men**. What would have happened in the last three years? Whether Sue would have been wearing a Wendyl Williams outfit now, instead of Storm.

CF: Speculate a little more along those lines, this is interesting.

Byrne: Well I can't speculate, really, because I don't know what would have happened. I think I know where I would have taken the X-Men, but the point is that at the point I left, I realised that they were no longer the characters—or perhaps had never been the characters—I thought they were so it was pointless to continue on that book. If the schism had gone the other way, if Chris had left...The only way I could deal with the X-Men in any context would be to do a story where Professor Xavier wakes up and says, "What a weird dream" and calls in Angel, Iceman, Marvel Girl and Beast and says, "Listen to this weird dream I had." Because I can just no longer relate to the "new" X-Men at all.

CF: It's funny that there are still quite a number of people in fandom that do prefer the old X-Men to the new X-Men.

Byrne: I think that I will always think of the old X-Men as the **real** X-Men. The old black and yellow costumes. The first eight issues of the book. I don't know who these guys are now, but they're not the X-Men.

CF: It seems that the...I guess the **New Mutants** was designed to alleviate that...but it seems like the direction that the **New X-Men** went in almost completely abrogated the whole purpose of the book.

Byrne: Yes, I almost would have preferred to see the New X-Men spin off to become the **New Mutants** and then to have the New Mutants come in to be the **New X-Men** because the X-Men really need Xavier and the school. That's really what the X-Men is all about.

CF: The whole idea that these are not adults and that they are being trained. Its funny, it seems that the old X-Men are going to regroup as the Defenders now.

Byrne: I'm not thrilled about that either. I'd rather get them all together and do a book called the **Old Mutants.**

CF: Going back to Wolverine for a moment, you mentioned that that's the character that you really worked

the most with. It also seems to be the character that has become the most popular. I wonder if you see a link there?

Byrne: I'd like to think there's a link, although his popularity has continued beyond me, just as the books have. Its very hard for me to stand up and wave my flag and say, "I made the X-Men great." because my departure from the **X-Men** meant no decline in sales. In fact, sales continued to climb. I could probably say that if I had not had my tenure on the **X-Men** as I did Wolverine would probably not be as popular as he is because Cockrum had no interest in Wolverine. He probably would have preferred to phase him out if anything. I can say that if Wolverine is a popular character today is probably because I started it but I can't claim anything beyond that. It's like the Wright brothers claiming 747s are their invention. It's progressed or slightly degressed, whatever. It's changed so far from my concept of the character.

CF: When Frank Miller did the mini-series using the Wolverine, did you feel that the character was handled in character? Or did he become more violent?

Byrne: I haven't read it to be honest with you. I looked at the pictures but I didn't read it. It's X-Men and as much as possible I don't read X-Men because I feel so distant from that book.

CF: Disillusioned with it.

Byrne: I wouldn't say disillusioned, but I just have no interest in the characters.

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STEERING MARVEL'S FLAGSHIP: THE FANTASTIC FOUR

CF: After **X-Men** you went over to the **Fantastic Four** which is a book that was set in a very firm path and then seemed to drift over a decade, really without a rudder.

Byrne: I think, and Stan will probably want my head for this, but I think that the departure of Kirby was really the loss in thirust for the Fantastic Four. Stan is a fabulous wordsmen. If there is anyone who has created the sound of the Marvel Universe, it is Stan Lee.

CF: He started out with a very deliberate plan for the Marvel Universe and worked that way.

Byrne: Yes, but the whole thrust of the characters seemed to have come from Kirby. You need do no more than look at the villains of the Kirby period and then from the Lee and everybody else period and I would say with a great deal of conviction that there has not been any new ones since Jack left that would even be on the scale with some of the weakest from Jack's period. I can't think of a post Jack character that I would put on the level as a Gregory Gidion. Hopefully we're getting out of it.

CF: You certainly can't imagine the FF series of last decade, truthfully even under you thus far, producing issue after issue of characters so memorable that they can carry their own books.

Byrne: I have not even made an attempt myself. Whatever my ego has inflated to, it hasn't inflated to the point where I think I can create characters of the calibre as that achieved by Jack and Stan. I don't even attempt to create characters who can spin into their own books. You're not going to get a Black Panther out of me. I think you're not going to get Inhumans out of me. I would like to think some day maybe, but not yet. I'm not going to hold up any character I've created and say **this** is the Black Panther, or anything. Galactus is really a vast untapped resource. I'm getting a lot of "boy am I sick of Galactus stories" from people but to me, we have only scratched the surface. I would love to spend time defining who and what Galactus is. This is not creating characters, its developing them.

If somebody had come to me and said, "Take over the Fantastic Four with issue #101," I would have said no way, I'm not following Stan and Jack.

CF: That's important also.

Byrne: Very important.

CF: We have to do something with them after we develop them. It's incredible though, there seems to be a momentum there for about twenty issues of the FF book where it just wouldn't stop. One major new development, one new character and you thought, "Well how are they going to top this?" and the very next issue they would, which is phenomenal.

Byrne: That went on for more than twenty issues too. I think that went on for a good fifty issues.

CF: Yeah, that was phenomenal. This was the book that you took over. Did you feel any awe?

Byrne: No. Because I didn't take over that book. I took over the book that it had been diluted into. If somebody had come to me and said, "Take over the Fantastic Four with issue #101," I would have said no way, I'm not following Stan and Jack. But they came to me and said, "Take over a hundred and thirty odd issues after Stan and Jack" and it had been diluted, and I might say perverted, to the point that I had no qualms at all about taking it over.

CF: When you did take it over what was your specific plan for returning the book to what it had been?

Byrne: I just started out by turning the clock back, so in effect, I am taking over with issue #101. Really nothing has happened since Stan and Jack and I know a lot of writers who handled it in that period have been offended by that approach. The sad fact

LOOK, LADY, I'M THAT ROBOT YOU CHANGED INTO A HUMAN BEING, BUT I DON'T WANNA BE HUM-AN SO CHANGE ME BACK...
QUICK!
WAY, CERTAINLY, IF YOU FEEL THAT WAY!
THE LAST LOAD, REMOVE REAL FAST!
ANY OF YOU LIKE A NICE, INVADED CITY COME THROUGH HERE?
YEAH, I SAW YOU HIDING SO I LET A PHYSAGE FOR YOU TWO HOODS!
P
W
YOUNG ROBOT, YOU STILL HAVE A WISH COMING TO YOU!
GOOD
I'VE GOT JUST THE WISH!
I MUST REMEMBER NEVER TO GRANT A WISH TO AN ANGRY ROBOT!
END

is that you can ignore a good hundred issues of the **Fantastic Four** because nothing significant happened.

CF: Its very odd that that's true because so many good writers have written the book during that period.

Byrne: Yes, but that was also the period where we were deluged with those unwritten laws. My own approach has been you can't not do this in this particular book. Every issue has to knock somebody for a loop. If they say we can't do X then I better bloody well do X next issue.

CF: Do you think there is a problem in taking a successful book that has been around for quite some time be it **Spiderman, Superman, Batman** or **The Fantastic Four**, and doing anything with it? Because there is so much licensing there is a built in rigidity.

Byrne: Every once in a while you have to weigh all that against the potential for greater success. I think Shooter presented me with the assumption that whatever I did with it would be an improvement. This is not diminishing what had gone on before, but it is an awareness that I cared about those characters and that I had an enthusiasm for those characters which in terms at least of what we see on paper had not been there for quite a while. If anyone was going to regenerate what had been the Fantastic Four it was likely to be me or at least somebody who thought like me and there didn't seem to be anybody who felt like me who was interested at the time. Roger Stern thinks like me but he still very much feels intimidated by the Fantastic Four. He didn't feel intimidated by Spiderman so wonderful things are happening to Spiderman. We are not ruled by licensing. We are not ruled by what has gone before. We are ruled by what is yet to come. I think the greatest example that we're not ruled by licensing is I've just changed the costumes.

CF: Of course that gives Marvel the opportunity to sell a whole new set of costumes.

Byrne: Well that was part of it.

CF: I think more along the lines of changing the book. For licensing purposes it would be less along the lines of changing the costumes and more along the lines of say permanently replacing the Human Torch or something like that.

Byrne: Obviously, if we were dealing solely with the point of view of licensing, we'd constantly be producing stuff that could be made into toys.

CF: Like the Spidermobile...

Byrne: The Spidermobile was well handled in Marvel Comics. We treated it as the silliness that it was. DC very seriously treated the Supermobile, which was one of the great dumb things that should never have found its way into the book. If I were to come up with a Thing-mobile or an Invisi-Mobile then I would say the licensing is ruling. They don't do that.

CF: There is the Fantasticar of course but that makes sense. But go back to the question of really changing the make-up of the FF.

Byrne: I wouldn't go that far. I wouldn't say that we couldn't, I really wouldn't these days. The whole thrust is that when you get down to bare bones, Fantastic Four is a generic title. Any four superpowered beings can be "a fantastic four" whether they become **The** Fantastic Four with a definite article depends upon how it's handled. The Thing has his own separate clearly distinctive title, it's not just a team up book. There is no reason in the world that the Thing couldn't leave the Fantastic Four permanently, go off in his own book and then be replaced permanently. There is no reason that the Torch couldn't leave, there is no reason that Reed couldn't leave or Sue couldn't leave or any combination thereof. I would hesitate to do it only because of my love for those particular characters. But that doesn't mean that I wouldn't do it if I felt that the story would work, because the story is foremost. If we came up with a good, powerful story, then why not?

CF: Would they still be the Fantastic Four though?

Byrne: Why not? There's turnover all the time.

CF: Because the Fantastic Four is a closeknit family, not a team.

Byrne: In many ways, but if I had

come to you in 1975 and said there is going to be a whole new X-Men you probably would have reacted the exact same way.

CF: But the X-Men was a school...

Byrne: Yes, but it was the same team for six years.

CF: But a school must change students. You don't usually change the members of your family.

Byrne: The X-Men hung to the same core. New members came and went away. It just stayed with the same core group until they lost their book. Families do indeed change. Family members die; people get divorced; people move away. I live 2000 miles from my parents. Franklin is going to grow up one of these days, he could become the fourth member of the Fantastic Four. If Johnny left or the Thing left or if Sue or Reed died or whatever might happen.

CF: Don't do anything to Reed and Sue. We need one happily married couple in comics. What do comic writers have against happily married couples?

Byrne: I have nothing against happily married couples. I think its great. In fact, I'm going to be doing stuff in the future that will have more of a bonding effect on Reed and Sue, rather than a separating effect. The point is: why can't they be happily married and leave the Fantastic Four—go off and say, "We we're not going to do this any more. We're going to be Mr. & Mrs. Middle America"— and two new characters come in and replace them and we still have the Fantastic Four?

CF: I think it was interesting the way you confronted the question, "What happens if they move to the suburbs, is this the end of the Fantastic Four again, are we splitting up still for the 6th time?"

Byrne: That was my sucker punch. I couldn't resist that one when I realized it was coming. Another "Fantastic Four Breaks up next issue"...Blurb. We addressed it in a realistic way. We've done this too many times before and it doesn't work.

CF: It was perfect. Now you have the **Thing** and you have the **Fantastic Four** and presumably the readers of the one book are not the readers of the other.

Byrne: Not based on the mail. No. The readers of the **Thing** seem to be a much younger audience.

CF: I guess the brute force is attractive.

Byrne: I don't know what is attractive. It will be interesting to see if they are still attracted to the kind of stories I want to do with this. I'm thinking in terms of making significant changes in the **Thing**. When I was writing the **FF** and Tom Defalco was writing the **Thing**, I resisted several major changes being made in Thing's own book. For one thing it was **Marvel Two-in-One** and I didn't consider it to be the Thing's own book. But now, now that its only the Thing's, there is no reason in the world say if Ben and Alicia got married, it should happen in the **Thing** because its his book. If Alicia died it should happen in the **Thing.**

CF: And these major events wouldn't be kept for the parent book?

Byrne: Not any more. Not since he has come unto himself. It would certainly be reflected in the parent book. Let's just take the death of Alicia. The death of Alicia would obviously have repercussions in the Fantastic Four, because she is as much a part of their lives as of Ben's. Obviously if she died in the **Thing** we wouldn't see fourteen issues of the **FF** where it wouldn't even get mentioned I'm seriously thinking that the major events in the Thing's life should happen in his own book.

CF: Doesn't that dilute the **Fantastic Four?**

Byrne: No, we still have the other three and we still have significant events for the Fantastic Four. It would dilute the Fantastic Four if significant events in the Fantastic Four had happened in the Thing, if the breakup had been real, for example. If they had actually broken up and they announced that in the **Thing**, I would have viewed that as a diluting of the **Fantastic Four** but if the Thing was going to get married, I think it is perfectly logical that he might announce it in **FF** but he would follow through in the **Thing.**

CF: Is there any chance that any other member could wind up with his own book, say the Human Torch?

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Byrne: I don't know. From what we've seen in the past, he doesn't seem to carry enough weight to get his own book.

CF: Once before with Timely and once before with Marvel he did carry his own book.

Byrne: Yes, but remember that was a different period and it was also a different Torch.

CF: Not with the **Strange Tales** issues.

Byrne: Yes, but that didn't last very long until they brought in the Thing to carry it. It seems that the Torch works best interacting with other characters.

CF: Primarily with The Thing it seems. Is the Torch going to pop up in the Thing's book?

Byrne: Occasionally. Most of the FF will be passing in and out of that book because, although he's going to be leaving for a while, Ben will be living in the Baxter building which is still their headquarters. There will be a lot of stories maybe that begin on the next to last page of the **FF** and finish in the **Thing** and then come back to the **FF** and vice versa. Obviously the characters will be carried around.

CF: What's ahead for the **Thing?**

Byrne: It's very nebulous at the moment. I don't have various things plotted in terms of hard stories. I must say my whole approach to the book is that it is Ben Grimm Comics not the Thing per se. My concern is the man who lives inside the Thing. We get all the big punching and hitting and stuff in the **FF** but I want to spend most of the **Thing** getting into Ben's head.

CF: So this is his personality and his life. This is your life Ben Grim..

Byrne: Hey, this guy is more than a

pile of orange rocks. This is where we underline that he doesn't like being the Thing. There are a lot of people who seem to have forgotten.

CF: I think for quite a while there Ben has been portrayed as enjoying being the Thing.

Byrne: I think that is real dumb, it's like coming to enjoy being the elephant man. You don't do that, especially in terms of Marvel time when it hasn't been all that long. If it had been twenty-odd years I would have said, "OK. He's probably adjusted to it." But it hasn't. We have to keep reminding ourselves of that.

CF: He had himself sort of convinced that if he ever changed from being the Thing he would lose Alicia.

Byrne: I redeveloped that from something that Stan had dropped many years ago. They wouldn't let me get rid of Alicia, they felt Alicia was too important to the Thing for me to get rid of her which is what I wanted to do. So I developed that relationship along wholly different lines. My problem with Alicia is that if the Thing is a tragic hero and he has a beautiful blind girlfriend, he's not terribly tragic anymore. I turned it around so that the beautiful blind girlfriend is one of the reasons he is tragic.

I want to get more into that area. I touched on it briefly when Johnny introduced Julie to Ben. She was frightened of him and I want to remind people he is a hero and most people remember him as a hero but still, meeting him for the first time is a shock. They are not used to this.

CF: In the early issues people cowered when they saw him. Little kids would point him out.

Byrne: In the early scenes he was really ugly which is hard to pull off with the rocks.

CF: Now he walks around and little kids want to go over and shake his hand.

Byrne: We're trying to get away from that. There are still those elements that people react to him primarily as a hero. The same issue of Julie being frightened of him a girl kisses him after he saves a little girl from a runaway horse. There are those who can get past the fact that he is ugly. But there are still those who can't see his soul, all they can see is a pile of orange rocks. He is supposed to be ugly, not an orange teddy bear. Where is the FF going? Well, they are going out of the Baxter building, into middle America. They are going to do a series that will once and for all lay to rest why the Phoenix had to die and Galactus doesn't. My "let's justify Galactus" story.

CF: A man who eats up whole planets—well, at least he doesn't eat his broccoli.

Byrne: Well we do...I have come up with a justification of Galactus, hints of which I dropped in #257.

CF: Tell us about the Galactus graphic novel.

Byrne: Well. At this point the Galactus graphic novel is only in the planning stage. All I can tell you is that it involves a renegade Watcher and a plan to move the galaxy to get it out of Galactus' reach. Beyond that I can't really go into it.

CF: That's the one I talked to you about. You mentioned that this renegade Watcher was doing something which was causing the destruction of whole galaxies?

Byrne: Yes, whole galaxies. It begins with Galactus following a daisy-chain of destroyed galaxies which lead him back to the Milky Way and that's when he discovers the plan that this renegade Watcher has, of moving the galaxy.

CF: Why? In order to get it away from Galactus?

Byrne: This Watcher is the Watcher that found Galactus originally—that wasn't our watcher—So this watcher was carrying this big chunk of guilt because he blamed himself for Galactus. He has gone mad as a result of it and is willing to do anything to save some portion of the universe from Galactus and in the process is destroying whole galaxies trying to get it right.

CF: He's willing to test it out on galaxies so that he can save some?

Byrne: Not so much testing it. Each step he is trying to figure out how to do it. Of course, if it doesn't work its the ultimate act of destruction.

CF: He figures he has nothing to lose. Galactus is going to destroy all, anyway. Galactus then becomes a hero and saves all?

Byrne: Well, thats the end of the story, I don't want to get into that part.

CF: I'm wondering if this is part of the motivation of why Galactus has to exist. Is there some sort of destiny he has to fulfill and this is part of his destiny?

Byrne: Oh definitely, dennitely. I've already dropped hints towards that. The graphic novel will, I hope, for all intents and purposes serve as the last Galactus story.

CF: You're doing away with the character.

Byrne: I'm not telling you that. I have the sequence in the **Fantastic Four** that will justify Galactus. Then we have to figure out where the Galactus graphic novel takes place relative to the Marvel time stream. If it takes place at any particular time in the future it could very well be the last Galactus story.

BACK TO CANADA WITH ALPHA FLIGHT

CF: What do you have planned ahead in **Alpha Flight?**

Byrne: Most of the stuff that I have planned there is figuring out who the people are. We're doing a lot of solo stories. Each issue is a 17-page story followed by a 5-page origin story back up. The full major thrust of it is to say, "Well, you really don't know who these people are. So this is who they are." Issue #5 gets into who Puck is, issue #6 gets into Snowbird, #7 & #8 deal with the Twins. #9 & #10 deal with Sasquach and #11 gets them all back together again, the big Guardian story which introduces Omega Flight. Sort of recurring villains.

CF: Omega Flight is going to be villains? I figured the various Greek letter flights would be heroes.

Byrne: No, we've got Beta and Gamma Flights and elements of Beta and Gamma are twisted and become Omega Flight.

CF: Omega Flight will be their nemesis.

Byrne: Yes, it will be their Brotherhood of Evil. We're already setting up our Doctor Doom for the book as the Master.

CF: Are the adventures going to continue to center about Canada?

Byrne: I think so. As much as American books center around America. I imagine we'll get cosmic stories. The solo story premise for the first year is being used primarily to figure out who are the most popular characters so that we can weed out our crew of eight here. Weed out the ones the kids don't like, get some new characters—we can have turnover here. In five years, Alpha Flight may be composed...

CF: Of totally different people.

Byrne: This remains to be seen.

CF: Thank you for your time and I certainly wish that the John Byrne Phenomenon continues to build. We'll check back after awhile if we may.

Byrne: Certainly and thank you.

HEROES

by James Van Hise

THE FANTASTIC FOUR

If Superman revolutionized comic books in 1938, then the **Fantastic Four** changed the face of comics in the Sixties. It was the flagship book of the then new Marvel line of superhero comics.

Although on the surface the origin of the Fantastic Four seems quite simple, it has become shrouded over the years in claims and counter-claims. None were cleared up by Stan Lee's 1974 book, **Origins of Marvel Comics,** in which Lee claimed to have single handedly created all of Marvel's most famous characters and then turned them over to someone such as Jack Kirby to draw as though he were a secondary cog in the creative machine.

Jack Kirby drew the first 102 issues of the magazine (as well as several annuals) and to this day his stamp of creativity remains on the book, not like a ghost haunting every panel but rather as a spirit infusing it with life. When Kirby left the book it was his approach that was imitated time and again, but the closest anyone could come was to recycle characters and villains that Kirby created during his long tenure on the series.

That Kirby was increasingly unhappy over the years with the way his efforts were acknowledged was a behind-the-scenes fact of life which did not come to light until he shocked Fandom by leaving Marvel for DC in 1970. Kirby at DC? Marvel without Jack Kirby? It was an impossible concept when you consider that in the early to mid-Sixties Kirby drew almost every single Marvel superhero comic series going during that time, including Sgt. Fury but excluding Spider-Man. This is when the chinks in Marvel's creative history first began to come to light.

In **The Rocket's Blast Comicollector #81,** an early comics fanzine, Jack Kirby was interviewed by Bruce Hamilton about why he switched to DC. "At DC I'm given the privilege of being associated with my own ideas. If I did come up with an idea at Marvel, they'd take it away from me and I lost all association with it. I was never given credit for the writing which I did. Most of the writing at Marvel is done by the artist from the script."

Regarding the **Fantastic Four** in particular Kirby went on to say, "It was my idea. It was my idea to do it the way it was; my idea to develop it the way it was. I'm not saying that Stan had nothing to do with it. Of course he did. We talked things out. As things went on, I began to work at home and I no longer came up to the office. I developed all the stuff at home and just sent it in. I had to come up with new ideas to help the strip sell. I was faced with the frustration of having to come up with new ideas and then having them taken from me."

In **Origins of Marvel Comics,** Stan Lee described the genesis of the book with Kirby waiting in the wings to accept the book as a **fait accompli** after all the really creative work was finished. Lee described a meeting with Martin Goodman wherein Goodman suggested that a superhero team book would be a good idea since DC's **Justice League of America** was selling very well. Lee also wanted to do a comic book such as he himself would like to read, one where the characters would not have secret identities and would also have genuine human emotions. The closest Lee comes to giving Kirby any creative credit is when he says, "After kicking it around with Martin and Jack for awhile I decided to call our quaint quartet The Fantastic Four. I wrote a detailed first synopsis for Jack to follow, and the rest is history." Of his working relationship with Kirby, Lee explained, "I had only to give Jack an outline of a story and he would draw the entire strip, breaking down the outline into exactly the right number of panels replete with action and drama. Then it remained for me to take Jack's artwork and add the captions and dialogue." This is not as simple as it sounds.

A comic book plot is generally a simple outline written on a couple sheets of paper, and when an artist and writer have been working together for any length of time at all it can be nothing more than a phone call. This is the Marvel style of writing. The artist is left to break the story down, establish how the conflict looks and add his own flourishes. In order to do this coherently the artist must write notes on the border of the page of art next to each panel describing the progression of the story. This often includes the dialogue so that the writer winds up just putting it in his own words. Whether the artist gets a co-author credit remains to be seen. In the case of Lee and Kirby this progressed to the point that Kirby was literally writing each book he drew and Lee just did the captions and dialogue at the end while still taking a full writing credit. This caused some unforeseen problems for Kirby later as other writers looked forward to working with Kirby and getting the same kind of sweetheart deal in which Kirby did the lion's share of the writing.

That Lee had an important input cannot be disputed, even if it was in rewriting Kirby's own captions and dialogue into a perhaps more dramatically satisfying form. This can be seen when comparing the Lee/Kirby comics with Kirby's solo books at DC. The visuals had the same impact but the writing style was missing something, then and now. His strengths clearly lie in creating and plotting. In **Silver Star #1,** a 1983 comic from Pacific Comics, one of Kirby's lines of dialogue reads, "Hey!

Come on, mister big! Don't rattle your gonads in **my** ears!" How picturesque, not to mention incongrous in the context.

While in more recent years Jack Kirby has been reluctant to discuss his early years at Marvel, in **The Spirit #39** ("Kitchen Sink", February '83] Kirby once more dwells on his early creative years at Marvel in an interview conducted by Will Eisner. He describes his returning to Atlas in the late Fifties on a dark day when the company was contemplating going out of business, and that he urged Stan Lee to hold it together because he had some ideas he wanted to institute about bringing back superheroes which were on the wane at the time. Lee supposedly gave Kirby's ideas credence because Kirby hadbeen a mover and shaker at Timely [which became Atlas which became Marvel] in the early Forties. Kirby is, after all, the co-creator of Captain America along with Joe Simon. What the interview fails to explore is why Kirby's ideas [which included Spider-Man] were not instituted until several years of monster books had foraged the newsstands under the Atlas imprint, books in which Kirby was the mainstay.

While there is no doubt that Kirby was a prime force in the creation of the Fantastic Four and perhaps the main force behind its most memorable issues, Stan Lee was an important force as well, although not quite the pivotal voice of creation he makes himself out to be in **Origins of Marvel Comics.**

Those early issues of **Fantastic Four** show the raw creative energies at work, as well as not quite as much analysis as goes into a story today. Their origin consists of Reed Richards stealing a rocket which he'd overseen the construction of so that they can "beat the Commies into space." He needs Ben Grimm as a pilot but Sue comes along because of that "where you go I do" chestnut and her kid brother Johnny Storm accompanies them for the same reason. How scientific. For some reason the ship isn't shielded against cosmic rays and their exposure to them changes the foursome. Upon crash landing they each find they've been transformed. In one of the sillier moments of this scene, when Ben Grimm changes into an orange-skinned behemoth, he becomes so angry that he grabs a tree and breaks it off in his hands. But why would he have had any inkling he could even do this? It's not exactly your average reflex reaction. The only reason all this wonderful hokum works when you read it is because it happens quickly [unlike the wordy, overwritten panels in Marvel Comics today]. The artwork by Kirby is strangely atmospheric, certainly much different even than the monster books he'd been drawing at the time and different from the way his work would change over the years. It has a very menacing air about it. They were certainly not trying to imitate a DC comic.

The second issue of FF introduced the Skrulls from outer space in a plotline which was picked up in a later Fantastic Four Annual. Issue four revived the Sub-Mariner, a popular character in Timely Comics of the Forties. But issue #5 introduced their quintessential nemesis—Doctor Doom. There was a furious imagination at work in those early issues as that single issue not only introduced Dr. Doom, gave a capsule origin, but also had the Fantastic Four forced to undertake a mission back in time—and it was all perfectly balanced. There was an art then in telling a story in a single issue, and leaving the reader satisfied. It had tension, suspense and a fast-paced plot. In issue #6 Dr. Doom returned in a team-up with the Sub-Mariner. Namor returned in #9 and Dr. Doom returned in #10, and yet you enjoyed how these return engagements were handled. There was a freshness about them rather than having them seem as if they just didn't have any better ideas. The people producing these comics actually seemed to like what they were doing, and on a monthly basis. You could tell that they looked forward to writing and drawing the next issue as much as we looked forward to reading it.

One of the nagging secrets in the F.F. over the years is what Dr. Doom looks like under his mask. While Darth Vader's true appearance was revealed in **Return of the Jedi,** Dr. Doom's true likeness will doubtless remain shrouded in mystery, at least within the pages of the comic. Jack Kirby has always been free with the facts about the good Doctor. "Dr. Doom was a perfectionist. Dr. Doom was a handsome guy and he had to hide his face in a steel mask because he had a scratch on his face. He couldn't stand that scratch." One wonders if he never heard of plastic surgery. At a convention some years ago, Jack Kirby did a drawing of Doom without his mask and it was indeed a man with a small scratch on his cheek. Some fans believed that Doom bore an uncanny likeness to Stan Lee but Kirby denied any such intent towards resemblance.

Those first few years of the F.F. featured a creative explosion incomparable in any other comic book title. The first 67 issues saw the birth of such characters as the Skrulls, Dr. Doom, Puppet Master, The Watcher, the Red Ghost and his super apes, the Mad Thinker, Dragon Man, Diablo, the Inhumans, the Black Panther, Galactus, the Silver Surfer, Klaw, the Frightful Four and the strange being Him (who under other hands became known as Warlock.) Then the torrent ceased. One could sense an unseen hand turning off the flow. After issue 67 no new major characters were created. It just

became a revolving cycle of appearances by old characters such as Dr. Doom, Galactus, the Silver Surfer and yet another Thing-on-the-rampage story. Kirby was holding back and it was clearly evident that this was so. He was obviously tired of creating something and not only watching Stan Lee take the bows but seeing Marvel absorb the character into their widening stable of successful Jack Kirby creations. So Kirby put on the brakes, did good work, but did not give the book that extra creative juice which had boosted it to popularity over the years, and the most telling aspect of all this is that Stan Lee was unable to pick up that slack or infuse the book with new major characters of his own. 'Nuff said.

When Kirby left the book the word came down that the F.F. must still have the Kirby look. The problem was that in imitating the art they neglected to imitate the necessary creativity, if such is even possible. So the years went by with a round robin of writers and artists doing pretty much what Kirby himself had done during his last three years on the title. There were glimmers of interest over the years but under the almost constant inks of Joe Sinnott (who did such a wonderful job inking Kirby), all the art looked the same and any character which might have been brought to the book by a different penciller was submerged under Sinnott's inks. Even when George Pérez (who's work on DC's **Teen Titans** book has made him one of the most popular artists in comics today) drew the F.F. back around '77, Sinnott did not ink to bring out Perez's strengths in drawing but rather to make it look like Joe Sinnott art, including having the male characters constantly gnashing their teeth [i.e. **F.F. #186,** page 6, panel 7, as well as many others in the same issue]. The stuff had not only begun to look alike long before this, it did look alike. Even distinctly non-Kirby stylists like Bill Sienkiewicz had their art transformed into ersatz Kirby under the inks of Joe Sinnott.

Then came **F.F. #232.**

John Byrne, who as a child discovered the F.F. with their pivotal issue #5, became disenchanted with his working relationship with Chris Claremont on the **X-Men** and decided to look elsewhere for a book where he could stretch creatively. What he settled on was the F.F., which is still Marvel's flagship title. Byrne had previously drawn the F.F. a couple of years prior to this latest stint on it but he was not satisfied with the stories or his art. Once again those earlier issues had been inked by Joe Sinnott and that special **frission** found in Byrne's art was nowhere to be seen.

This time Byrne approached F.F. with a much stronger idea of what he wanted to do and this was heavily influenced by the **feelings** he had carried away from those early Lee/Kirby issues. His goal was to not only infuse the book with the same sort of energetic atmosphere of those early years, but to once more bring change and growth to the title, something which had been absent. The F.F. had long been a victim of recurring plot twiches such as losing their powers only to regain them one way or another a couple issues later. This has been done so often that whenever it reappears it's, "Oh, no, not this plot again!" Byrne has been very successful at capturing the feel of excitement of those early years although he has fallen victim to the Galactus syndrome. Another cliche has been to return Galactus, who must absorb the energies of Earth to live, only to have him bamboozled into leaving at the end of the story. He marked time with yet another one of those. Ho hum. Galactus, like most cosmic characters, became dull quickly because what can you do with him which hasn't already been done except to kill him?

One of the best of these earlier stories was "Terror in a Tiny Town" in #238 an amazingly effective story whose plot was borrowed uncredited from the Frederik Pohl science fiction story "Tunnel Under the World."

Byrne's writing on this title has been remarkably good considering he had little previously credited [outside of co-plotting the **X-Men**], other than **Marvel Two-In-One #50**, a sad attempt at scripting a nostalgic Sixties-style story which took a terrific idea and squandered it by having a silly ten-page fight scene in a 17-page story.

The only other problem with these Byrne issues is that he just doesn't know how to ink his own work for reproduction on the shoddy paper on which most comics are printed. Terry Austin may take some liberties when inking Byrne's pencils, but when Byrne inks them the result looks like much of the linework blotted during printing. Byrne would do better saving his inking for when his work will appear on whiter paper.

Some previous writers of the F.F. such as Len Wein and Marv Wolfman, have complained that Byrne is making too many sweeping changes by doing things such as summarily transporting the Great Refuge of the Inhumans to the blue area of the Moon. This is the whole point. The comic has been stagnant and predictable for a decade and Byrne is striving to change this, and succeeding. I've been reading the F.F. since #13 and I like what I see these days. When a comic has dubbed itself "The World's Greatest Comic Magazine!" as long as this one has, it's about time that it did something to earn it rather than resting on the laurels of what Jack Kirby did almost fifteen years ago.

LEGGO OF MY PLANE, YOU CRUMBS! I OUGHTTA PULVERIZE YA FOR THAT!
THING! KNOCK IT OFF! I SOLD THE PLANE TO THEM! I HAD TO, WE'RE GETTING A GOOD PRICE FOR IT.
NO PRICE IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ALL THE WORK AN' PLAY AN' DESIGNIN' WE'VE PUT INTO THAT THING!
I KNOW! HOW YOU FEEL, THING--BUT WE'VE GOTTA SELL THE PLANE--AND EVERYTHING ELSE, TOO!
OKAY, OKAY, I'M COOLED OFF NOW! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE! THAT'S ALL --LEAVE ME ALONE!
I--I NEVER THOUGHT I'D SEE THE DAY WHEN WE'D LOSE ALL OF REED'S WONDERFUL INVENTIONS!
SOME ROTTEN MANAGER YOU WERE, RUBBER-MAN! YOU MADE A FORTUNE BY SELLING PATENTS ON ALL YOUR INVENTIONS --ENOUGH DOUGH TO KEEP US GOING FOR YEARS--BUT YOU HADDA BE A BIG SHOT AND INVEST IT ALL IN STOCKS! YOU LUNKHEAD!
TAKE IT EASY, THING! YOU CAN RIDE A MAN JUST SO FAR--AND--WE'LL FINALLY BREAK! I'M WARNING YOU!
BAH! MAYBE IT'S BETTER THIS WAY! THOSE THREE DO-GOODERS WERE BEGINNIN' TO CRAMP MY STYLE! I CAN PROBABLY MAKE OUT BETTER ON MY OWN! TAXI! HEY, TAXI!
SAY, YOU'RE THE THING, AIN'T YOU? SORRY, PAL, YOU AIN'T RIDIN' THIS CAB! I HEARD HOW THE FOUR OF YOU ARE FLAT BROKE! I DON'T WANNA BE HUNG UP FOR NO TAXI BILL!
SO! YOU DON'T WANT ME FOR A PASSENGER, EH? WELL, I'M THRU TAKIN' GUFF FROM CREEPS LIKE YOU!
HEY! LET ME DOWN, NO! STOP! HALLP!
3

LOOKING BACK ON THE GOLDEN AGE

By Ron Goulart

The Quality Gang (Part 1)

In this series we'll be talking mostly about the heroes and heroines who flourished in the comic books of forty and more years ago. Some of them possessed incredible superpowers and wild talents, others had nothing more than a fleshy outfit and a stubborn determination to rid the world of evil. We'll also consider characters who were merely soldiers of fortune, policewomen, daredevil pilots, boy inventors, etc.

The initial title in what was to be E.M. "Busy" Arnold's Quality line, **Feature** was a magazine that changed its policy, and its name, in midstream. Commencing life in the fall of 1937 as **Feature Funnies**, it was basically a reprint title in the manner of **Famous Funnies** and **Popular Comics.** Less than two years later, when its title was switched to **Feature Comics,** several original characters were to be found in the magazine's pages.

Although the majority of the contents was reprint material—such as **Joe Palooka, Dixie Dugan, Mickey Finn** and Ed Wheelan's **Big Top—Feature** did use some original stuff from the start. The second issue, for instance, saw both the debut and farewell appearance of a hooded detective known as the Hawk ["When the police fail, **The Hawk** doesn't."]. The next month the Clock took over. The creation of George E. Brenner, who'd done the short-lived Hawk, the Clock did his crimefighting clad in a tuxedo and a facelength black mask. By the time he showed up in **Feature** the dapper sleuth was a comic book veteran, having already appeared in **Funny Pages, Funny Picture Stories** and **Detective Picture Stories.**

Among the other pioneering heroes were Jim Swift, Clip Chance and the Gallant Knight. A pirate strip called **Hawks Of The Seas** was also in the early lineup. Not strictly original, since the material had appeared previously in some overseas publications, **Hawks** was done by Will Eisner while hiding behind the penname of Willis B. Rensie. Using yet another false name, Will Erwin, this time, Eisner created a brand new strip for the magazine. This was **Espionage** ["A dangerous branch of the service in which there is no turning back, no rescue if you are caught, no glory if you succeed..."] and starred a sueve moustached and monocled chap named Richard Spencer, better known in secret agent circles as Black X. He operated out of the magazine from #13 (October 1938) through #22 (July 1939) and then jumped over to **Smash Comics.**

Other new strips kept appearing in the magazine's first two years, easing out more and more of the newspaper reprints. There were **Captain Cook of Scotland Yard, Reynold of the Mounties** and **Rance Keane.** This latter, a cowboy feature, was drawn by the gifted William A. Smith, who went on to become a **Saturday Evening Post** illustrator and gallery painter.

It wasn't until December 1939 that **Feature** got its first superhero, and a teenie weenie one at that. There wasn't any fanfare when the Doll Man first showed up, in issue #27. Joe Palooka was on the cover and the initial adventure was only four pages long. In fact, Doll Man didn't even get a costume until his second appearance. Possibly because you couldn't buy clothes that smell off the rack. The strip was drawn, despite various history and price guide statements to the contrary, by Lou Fine and written by Eisner under the nomme de plume of William Erwin Maxwell. Possibly inspired by the 1936 movie **The Devil Doll,** handsome young scientist Darrel Dane is bent on concocting a fluid that will miniaturize people. When we first encounter him, he's just perfected the stuff. "This liquid will SHRINK a human being to the size of a doll!" The first question his associate asks upon hearing this statement is, "How will it react on a human's mind?" Seems to me a much more pertinent question would've been, "Why do you want to do something as dippy as that?"

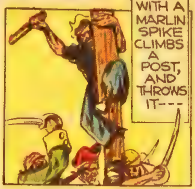
The advantages of being roughly the size of a Barbie doll are few, yet Dane was greatly enthusiastic about his discovery. He also works out a way to return to his true size when he wishes to and only shrinks when it's time to combat evil and crime. In real life a law enforcement agent or private investigator who was less than a foot high would probably not thrive or last very long. Someone would more than likely step on him, he might slip through a crack or get flushed down a drain. In comic books, however, Doll Man had a brilliant career that stretched across nearly a decade and a half. He was in **Feature** until its very last issue (October 1949) and starred in a magazine of his own from 1941 until late in 1953. Besides the exceptional Lou Fine, Doll Man was drawn by such capable artists as John Celardo, Reed Crandall and John Spranger. On **Feature** covers he was depicted by, among others, Gill Fox and Al Bryant.

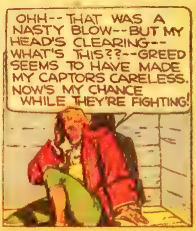
Doll Man was to be just about the only **Feature** hero who could claim anything in the way of superpowers. In #42 (March 1941) a lady with some pretentions to costumed crimefighting began a short career.

HAWKS OF THE SEAS

BY Willis Partridge

WHEN THE HAWK IS RECOGNIZED BY CARLOS' MEN, HE FIGHTS IT OUT WITH THEM--




OHH-- THAT WAS A NASTY BLOW--BUT MY HEAD'S CLEARING-- WHAT'S THIS??--GREED SEEMS TO HAVE MADE MY CAPTORS CARELESS. NOW'S MY CHANCE WHILE THEY'RE FIGHTING!

Drawn by Maurice Gutwirth, one of the great godawful artists of the Golden Age, she was called USA, The Spirit of Old Glory. A ghost actually, she came back to life, wearing a scant blue costume, to fight against spies and subversives. She carried an American flag around with her and it apparently signaled her when trouble was brewing ["My flag droops...Danger lurks."]. USA was harsh in dispensing justice and after causing her enemies to be destroyed in some especially violent way would proclaim, "All others who defy my flag and torch will suffer your fate!"

Among the other additions to the cast were a ghostbreaker named Zero, a blond jungle man called Samar and an adventurous youth named Rusty Ryan. Rusty eventually teamed up with some of his orphan chums to form a gang of uniformed vigilantes known as the Boyville Brigadiers ["Pledged to uphold The American Way"]. The October 1941 issue introduced Swing Sisson, one of the few bandleader heroes ever to appear in comics. Originally written and drawn by Phil Martin, the strip was in the crime and detective vein and had Swing and his band tangling with racketeers, extortionists and dope dealers. Of a somewhat more bizarre nature was **The Spider Widow,** which dealt with a "wealthy and beautiful sportswoman of society" who transforms herself into a witch-like old crone, "the most horrible dispenser of justice of all times!" Dreamed up by Frank Borth [last seen working on the **There Oughta Be A Law** panel], this was an unusual feature, especially after the introduction of a rival costumed character. This was a gent named the Raven and he and the Widow began by competing and eventually fell in love.

In between all the heroics you found filler pages devoted to comedy characters. After the reprints of Wheelan's **Big Top** and Rube Goldberg's **Lala Palooza** ran out, the strips continued with new material. Both were carried on by Johnny Devlin and then Bernard Dibble, veterans of the newspaper strip field. Arthur Beaman did a page about **Homer Doodle and Son** and Gill Fox contributed **Poison Ivy.** Poison, who went around in a diaper and an aggressively cocked derby hat, was the toughest little kid in comics and Fox used him to poke fun at the excesses of the more serious superguys. During part of this time he was also serving as editor of **Feature Comics.**

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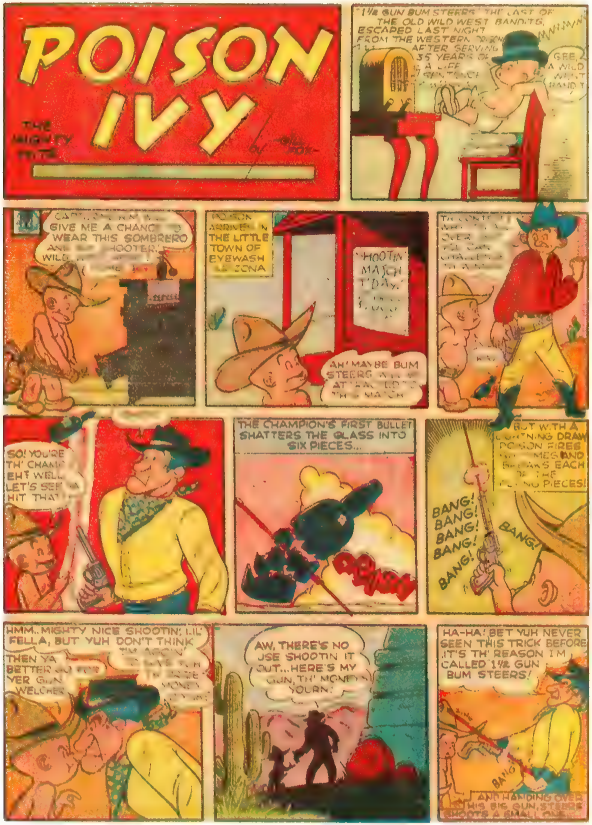
Quality's first companion to **Feature** came along in the summer of 1939, graced with the somewhat more socko title of **Smash Comics.** Despite the fact that **Smash** was made up entirely of original material and hit the stands over a year after **Action Comics,** there was not one superhero in the first issue. The closest thing was a somewhat clunkylooking robot named Bozo, another invention of the diligent but second-rate George E. Brenner. Apparently neither Arnold nor Will Eisner, whose shop was producing much of the **Smash** material, had been very impressed by the advent of Superman. For the new magazine Eisner himself drew **Espionage,** with his suave spy renamed Black Ace in the early issues. Captain Cook and Clip Chance, dull fellows both, dropped over from **Feature** and there was an aviation strip with Wings Wendall, an ace reporter strip starring Chic Carter [no relation to radio's Nick Carter or Chick Carter] and a desert epic devoted to Abdul the Arab. All these were drawn initially by Vernon Henkel.

In the second issue **Invisible Justice** was added to the roster. The hero of this was actually known as the Invisible Hood, because of a hooded robe he donned, "which is covered with a secret chemical that makes the wearer invisible." Although this feature had the fantasy element required for superhero fare, it was dull and prosaic and lacked the necessery action and excitement. Closer to the mark was Magno, who made his debut in #13 [August 1940]. Since his first adventure only ran four pages, Magno had no room for a fullfledged origin and so it was all explained in the leadoff caption. "Known to his fellow workers as plain Tom Dalton, a lineman, but secretly fighting all crime and evil is MAGNO, a fabulous figure... His amazing powers are the result of having been electrocuted by 10,000 DC volts, then being shocked back to life by an equal current of AC volts!" The blond Magno wore tunic and shorts of scarlet chainmail topped by a blue cape. He was drawn, for all of his brief nine issue career, by Paul Gustavson. What Gustavson lacked in technical skill at this stage he more than made up for with lively layouts and enthusiastic inking. He understood that the illusion of almost continuous action was essential to this sort of adventure.

Magno probably wouldn't have become a star anyway, but he never even got a chance to try for the top spot. The very next issue after his debut the Ray arrived. Billed as the "new sensation of the comic magazines," he, too, was launched in the good guy business by an electrical accident. "Happy Terrill was just another adventurous reporter...until


POISON IVY
THE MIGHTY MITE
by
1/8 GUN BUM STEERS, THE LAST OF THE OLD WILD WEST BANDITS, ESCAPED LAST NIGHT FROM THE WESTERN PRISON AFTER SERVING 35 YEARS OF A LIFE SENTENCE
GEE, A WILD WEST BANDIT
GIVE ME A CHANCE! WEAR THIS SOMBRERO AND I'M A SHOOTER WILD...
THE LITTLE TOWN OF EYEWASH ARIZONA
"SHOOTIN' MATCH TODAY"
AH! MAYBE BUM STEERS WILL BE ATTENDIN' THIS MATCH
SO! YOU'RE TH' CHAMP, EH? WELL, LET'S SEE YUH HIT THAT!
THE CHAMPION'S FIRST BULLET SHATTERS THE GLASS INTO SIX PIECES...
BUT WITH A LIGHTNING DRAW POISON FIRES AND BREAKS EACH OF THE FLYING PIECES!
BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG! BANG!
HMM.. MIGHTY NICE SHOOTIN', LIL' FELLA, BUT YUH DON'T THINK YUH CAN BEAT MY SHOOTIN', DO YUH?
THEN YA BETTER GET YER GUN, WELCHER
AW, THERE'S NO USE SHOOTIN' IT OUT... HERE'S MY GUN, TH' MONEY'S YOURN.
HA-HA! BET YUH NEVER SEEN THIS TRICK BEFORE, IT'S TH' REASON I'M CALLED 1/8 GUN BUM STEERS!
AN' HANDING OVER HIS BIG GUN, STEERS SHOOTS A SMALL ONE!
BANG

an electric shock in the stratosphere gave him the mysterious powers of THE RAY." These mysterious powers include the ability to fly, to materialize out of a beam of light and to convert from a business suited newsman to a yellow costumed hero by some mystical means that doesn't involve dressing and undressing. The stories were not that compelling, alternating between gangster sequences and fantasies involving monsters and pirates, but what made the Ray worth following was the artwork. Lou Fine, under the somewhat less than serious penname of E.Lectron, rendered the first adventures. He used the same bravura style he'd developed on Doll Man. When he stepped aside, he was succeeded by the dependable Reed Crandall.

Despite his less than terrific story lines the Ray might well have remained the head man at **Smash Comics** if the sly Jack Cole hadn't come up with **Midnight** in #18 (January 1941). At first glance Midnight was just another crimefighter who went about his appointed rounds wearing a business suit, snapbrim hat and mask. Arnold already had similarly attired heroes in the Spirit (the weekly newspaper insert booklets had commenced in June 1940, although the Spirit wouldn't find his way into a newsstand comic book until the fall of 1942) and the Clock. The issue that had a nine page Ray yarn in the opening spot, Cole's new creation got a mere five pages toward the back of the book. There is no origin given, only the statement "By day Dave Clark is just an ordinary American...a spot announcer for Station UMAX. But darkness finds him in the garb of MIDNIGHT, an eerie friend of the needy."

Even back in those eclectic days, when down and out newspaper veterans, moonlighting pulp illustrators and inkcrazed teenagers were all finding work in comic books, Jack Cole's stuff stood out. He'd begun his drawing life wanting to be a gag cartoonist and all his adventure features have a touch of his big foot in background and inclinations. His layouts were bold and unconventional, utilizing incredible long shots, down shots and closeups and other approaches that filtered the framing tricks of action films and animated cartoons through his unusual mind. Cole also possessed a strong and active sense of humor. He never took anything too seriously in his hero strips, including violence, death and vast destruction. His humor is personal and quirky, alternating between broad slapstick and quiet kidding, and there is often a perverse touch to the proceedings. When he was at his best, and not batting out a job, Cole's work was impressive in its pacing, staging and the sense of fun and action it conveyed. A man who apparently wrote most of his own scripts, he concocted plots that were full of fantasy, violence and wisecracks.

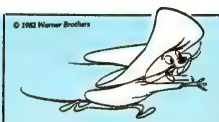
Whereas some costumed crimefighters at this time were taking on teenage boys as sidekicks, Midnight teamed up with a monkey. A talking monkey named, aptly enough, Gabby. The next addition to his crew was a whitewhiskered mad scientist known as Doc Wackey. Wackey originally is a villain, who's invented a capsule that reduces adults to babies. This drug he delivers in person, using a bean shooter to send it into his victims' gaping mouths. During his first encounter with Midnight the good doctor is converted ("I'm going to give you another chance," says Midnight. "How would you like to join up with US and work AGAINST crime??"). The reformed criminal, as we'll see in later articles, was one of Cole's favorite character types. Wackey's inventions, which include a two-way wrist radio that preceded Dick Tracy's, aid Midnight in his anticrime crusade.

Cole's stories showed considerable variety, tales of bloody murder in Hollywood alternating with fantasies about mesmerinded mystics who can walk through walls and death rays that melt people down to multicolored ooze. In less than a year after his first appearance Midnight became the regular cover star, appearing on every one from #28 (November 1941) to the end of the magazine's run in the autumn of 1949. Cole left the feature for a few years and Paul Gustavson took over.

A bit earlier Gustavson, after his Magno was retired, created the Jester ("Chuck Lane, the fumbling rookie of the New York police force, is, in his hilarious role as the Jester, the most feared enforcer of the law in the city...a laughing clown with the striking force of a thunderbolt!!"). Among the other characters added to **Smash** were the Marksman ("Polish patriot, Baron Povalsky, still fights to break the Nazi chains and free his people...disquised as Nazi Major Hurtz, he wages his battle within the enemy ranks as the famed and feared **Marksman!!**"), who had no superpowers and used a bow and arrow as his weapon; Wildfire, a redhaired lady in a very skimpy crimson costume, who had been "given the power of flames by the god of fire"; Lady Luck, the greenclad crimefighter from the weekly **Spirit** Booklet. These four page adventures were all reprints, making use only of work done during Klaus Nordling's admirable stint of drawing and writing about the debutante who doubled as a detective. By 1949, when supermen were losing favor and crime and sexy ladies were gaining in popularity, **Smash Comics** closed up shop and its stable of heroes was put out to pasture. The magazine went on for five more issues under the new title of **Lady Luck.**

AS THE RAY ADVANCES, THE HIDEOUS CADAVA WHIPS OUT A SHARP BLADE
BUT THE RAY IS TOO SWIFT FOR HIM
MASTER!
THE GUN! THE GUN! AH... HERE IT IS!
STRUGGLING FIERCELY, THE TWO STAGGER TO THE BRINK AND FALL HEADLONG INTO THE BLACK WATER...
A FITTING END FOD THE SEWER KING!
SCREAMING SHRILLY, SOO CHOO CONFRONTS THE RAY, HIS FINGER TREMBLING ON A TRIGGER
BUT...
GO TO YOUR MASTER, POOR, LOYAL SERVANT!
THE MYSTIC POWER IN THE RAY'S FINGERTIPS BRINGS DIANE FROM HER STUPOR...
I'LL TAKE YOU HOME NOW... THEN I CAN BEGIN WORK ON THE RUINED CITY!
TOGETHER, THE RAY AND DIANE RISE ABOVE THE EERIE CATACOMBS
AND RETURN TO THE SURFACE...
SOON THE CITY TOWERS ARE RECONSTRUCTED... BY THE STRANGE FORCES CONTROLLED BY THE RAY.

The Ray, new sensation of comic magazines, appears each month in SMASH COMICS.



Animated Antics

JAMES VAN HISE

TOM and JERRY

IDI AMIN'S FAVORITE CARTOON

The chase cartoon is probably the most popular kind of story to utilize the form and no other series used this style better than the Tom & Jerry cartoons of MGM.

The finest cartoons in this series were created, directed and written by William Hanna and Joseph Barbera for MGM Studios from 1940 to around 1956. Although the names Hanna & Barbera tend to imply the worst in modern animation, it wasn't always this way. Even in TV their early productions are very good, **Johnny Quest** being a fine example. But where Hanna & Barbera excelled was in their hands-on creative work on the Tom & Jerry cartoons, a series which still sparkles with just as much life and freshness today as it did thirty and forty years ago.

Tom and Jerry, in slightly different form, first appeared in the 1940 short **Puss Gets The Boot.** Although not credited, the direction is by Hanna and Barbera. The cat's name is Jasper and is recognizeable as the cat who would become Tom, but the unnamed mouse looks slightly different from the very familiar Jerry. MGM wasn't sure the cartoon would go anywhere and were taken by surprise when it was not only an unqualified hit but received an Oscar nomination. Hanna and Barbera were immediately assigned to develop the cartoon duo for the next fifteen years.

William Hanna had begun at the Harmon and Ising studio in 1931 doing menial work and learning the basics of animation. When MGM lured many of that studio's best people away in 1937, Hanna was part of the exodus. He wanted to be a cartoon director and he saw this as his opportunity.

Joseph Barbera was an inbetweener at the Van Buren Studios and then moved to Paul Terry Productions when Van Buren closed up. In 1937 he too was lured to MGM.

It was at MGM that Hanna and Barbera formed their partnership, each having creative strengths which they found would interact well with the other. While Barbera excelled in gag comedy, Hanna had a finely developed sense of timing. This came together to stunning effect in **Puss Gets The Boot** and they were off and running.

What makes the Tom & Jerry cartoons so good is the choreographed mania combined with the personality and character interaction of these seemingly mismatched antagonists. Nearly every cartoon is a furious race wherein the starting pistol has sounded before we even look in. It's a clash of wills and personalities wherein Tom suffers excrutiating torments only to return more determined than ever. The thrill of the chase is, if anything, made even more keen by the pain he endures while pursuing his goal. And it is the chase that forms both the crux of the action and the **raison d'etre** for the cartoons, for catching his prey would bring the thrills to a close. Whenever he does capture Jerry he invariably releases him or shunts him aside in preparation for another burst of menia. And all of it is presented in flawless full animation, including the detailed character reaction shots.

One aspect which must be taken into account when looking back over the creative history of this series is the influence of Tex Avery. When he joined MGM in the early Forties, his wild excursions fired the imagination of everyone he worked with, and although Tex didn't work directly on this series, the influence felt just by having him around is clearly in evidence, especially the exaggerated character takes where the jaw would drop to the floor and eyeballs would leap from the skull. Of Tex Avery, Bill Hanna expressed the highest admiration: "Tex had a little different approach to cartooning than us, and I always thought his cartoons were funnier than ours. I really have great admiration for Tex Avery, both as an artist and as a creator. He did much to establish animation styles and techniques."

The second Tom & Jerry to win an Oscar was 1943's **Yankee Doodle Mouse.** It would be the first of seven Oscars which the series would take home over the next nine years, to all intents and purposes pushing Disney aside in the shorts category when the studio was clearly producing its pinnacle of work.

The animators on the Tom & Jerry cartoons were some of the best in the business. Irven Spence (who more recently worked on such films as **Wizards**) headed up a talented team composed of Ed Barge, Ken Muse and Ray Patterson. Their painstaking work included a battery of pencil-tests which were sometimes redone to capture just the right expression before taking it on to the full animation schedule.

Since words were never spoken by the title characters (unless screams and shrieks can be called words), the flow and rhythm of the action had to be bolstered by just the right sounds, and frenzied harmonies chosen by musical director Scott Bradley always hit the mark. The rising chords and strident melodies served to punctuate and underscore the action, bolstering it to make a strong scene even stronger, but with humor rather than grandeur.

© 1982 MGM

The only words were those generally spoken by Mammy Two Shoes, the black housekeeper who is only seen from the waist down, thus emphasizing the lower echelon existence occupied by cats and mice in a world of human beings. Although your typical Black stereotype of the time for a female (She was built like a medicine ball), who uttered such classic lines as "This ain't no place for no lady!", she was the power of authority threatening both Tom & Jerry, but her threats always seemed somehow impotent. The fact that she was black was only rarely pointed out, such as when Tom is buried in a pile of coal and emerges looking like the character Lightnin' from the old **Amos & Andy** series. She calls him "Boy" and when she sees that he's really a cat from the waist down, Tom drops his dopey-eyed pose and heads for the hills.

When these cartoons were put together as a series shown on Saturday morning in the Sixties (on Sundays in some areas), Mammy Two Shoes underwent animation surgery into an Irish housemaid with appropriate voice done by June Foray. Whither these touched up versions went I don't know as the cartoons shown in syndication now are the original uncut versions.

One other admittedly controversial element of these cartoons, and which contributed in no small measure to their success, is the violence. Meat cleavers, axes and steaming hot irons are deployed with threatening regularity, eliciting only screams of fear and superficial injuries. The blatant use of these horrible weapons cannot help but elicit laughter just from the very brazenness of the act. One imagines what the real consequences might be while the characters react to the the threat as though it were real even though the aftermath is fleeting even as it blends into one more scene of imaginary mayhem. Bill Hanna once remarked that a studio official would good-naturedly observe, "You sure do beat the shit out of that cat."

These selfsame cartoons which millions of children grew up on are apparently forever banned form Network airing as children's programming because they ostensibly contain "imitatable violence," and of course we all know that all normal children want to find out what happens if they really try to shore their friend in two.

On this subject Bill Hanna responds, "My argument against our critics is that there are two kinds of violence. There is violence just for violence's sake, presented in a realistic form; and there is fantasy violence, done in comedy form. I agree with critics who say that imitative violence is bad. Now the psychologists and program practices people are easing up on us because they have come to realise that our type of violence is just for fun and is not imitative."

On the same subject Walter Lance ventured the following observation, "I wouldn't say that the Tom and Jerrys, the Bugs Bunnys, the Popeyes, or the Disney cartoons were violent. They used the same techniques that I used. Nobody really bleeds or dies in these cartoons. If someone is shot full of holes, he is back to normal in the next scene; if his teeth fall out, he has a full set an instant later. The trouble today is that these groups have set themselves up as censors, and they don't know what they are talking about because they don't look at these cartoons through the eyes of children. They should be home taking care of their kids instead of setting themselves up as critics."

The most fondly remembered Tom & Jerry cartoons are those which contain not just explosions of mayhem, imaginative and carefully calculated, but all contrived and with a point. There is always a goal and a plot of sorts which works because they're only about seven minutes long. One can move quickly from one notion to another without exhausting the viewer and possible variant on the idea in that short span. But underscoring it all and making it work is the marvelous character animation which makes you believe that this carefully rendered cat and mouse are truly experiencing these absurd horrors which they're putting each other through.

One of the best of these departed from the standard chase motif and is probably the best cartoon in the series—**Heavenly Puss**. This is the one where Tom is killed by a falling piano and is knocked straight to Hell. In order to save his carcass from the fiery pot he must get Jerry to sign a document forgiving Tom for tormenting him in life, and he must obtain the signature in one hour. It is one of the wildest and most off-the-wall cartoons you'll ever see, underscored by the brazen viciousness which made these cartoons so uniquely funny. You can take someone who has never seen one, sit them down in front of them and they'll exclaim, "Oh my God, I never saw a cartoon do that!" and they'll be fans for life.

In 1975 when Hanna and Barbera wanted to revive these cartoons on Network, they screened them for the executives who laughed uproariously while explaining that they could never get away with showing them on TV today.

Another aspect of this series which is missing from such things as the Road Runner and Coyote cartoons is the way contraptions are used. In the Road Runner cartoons, if the Coyote employs an Acme device which fails through no fault of the device, he

discards it and quite illogically goes for something else. In the Tom & Jerrys, if something momentarily fails, such as a pair of homemade wings which Tom is using to pursue a canary, he doesn't discard them but rather picks himself up, brushes himself off, puts the wings back on repairing whatever was sabotaged and takes off once more into the wild blue yonder, which makes much more sense than the pointless throwaways of a very good idea as is often done in the Road Runner cartoons.

As the years wore on, Hanna and Barbera felt that additional characters had to be introduced to provide some variation. There was Tuffy, the little grey mouse, as well as the two dogs, Spike and Tyke, and even an obnoxious little duck that you prayed Tom would eat in order to get it out of the way. This duck was later given his own series in the Sixties and called Yakky Doodle. None of these supporting characters were particularly good and only served as distractions rather than as springboard for interesting stories.

After 1956, Hanna and Barbera were still in charge of the Tom & Jerry cartoons, but their special hands-on touch was clearly missing, and when MGM disbanded their cartoon studio, Hanna and Barbera took that as their cue to move on and open their own production company.

MGM was not finished with Tom and Jerry, though. In the early Sixties they had Czech director Gene Deitch do 13 new cartoons. His crew only saw six of the original series to learn the characters and the results, although commercially successful, were less then exciting.

Next Chuck Jones and producer Les Goldman were approached by MGM to do another Tom and Jerry series. The problem was, Jones didn't really understand the characters he was handling, and it showed.

"Well, I didn't understand them the way Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera did," Jones explained. "They used a kind of violence which I seldom used, and if I did use it, it was a mistake and I regretted it. They would have an ax come down and take off all the fur on Tom's back and tail. In their golfing film the ball hit Tom in the teeth and left a hole there, and then the teeth fell out. That kind of thing, to me, is much more hurtful than somebody falling off a cliff.

"I tried to make them like Bill and Joe, but it didn't work, so I just kind of changed the characters to fit my own way of thinking. So mine were, I'd say, much gentler than theirs, and probably not as funny."

Although done in full animation, these personalized versions had the obvious Chuck Jones touch as his art style was extremely evident even to the extent that Tom actually looked cute! Yet the wacky creativity of the originals was long gone, which was surprising because the classic Chuck Jones cartoons are known for their wacky creativity.

When Hanna/Barbera Productions produced the new Tom & Jerry Show in the late Seventies, all that remained was the name. Tom & Jerry were a cat and mouse who were friends embarking on drab adventures. It was more devoid of humor and creativity than any of the other post-Fifties efforts. Needless to say, it flopped.

In the Sixties, when Hanna/Barbera Productions were creating new characters for TV, they returned to the time honored concept of cat versus mouse and came up with Pixie, Dixie and Mr. Jinx, a thinly disguised imitation characterized only by Mr. Jinx's memorable vocalization, "I hate you meeses to pieces!"

In comparing his later work to the early MGM cartoon shop work which brought in award after award, Bill Hanna said, "The pressures of television are much greater than the pressures of producing films for theatres. Back when we made the MGM cartoons, we worked at a more leisurely, almost relaxed pace. There was infinitely more care put into the drawing, timing, sound effects and the recording of the music. Much more time was taken to discuss the stories and to design the characters; pictures were reviewed in pencil-test form and changes were made before they were inked and painted. It was a more elaborate process. Every phase of production was handled much more carefully than it is today. We just don't have the time today to put in all that effort."

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(Note: All quotes in this article are taken from various interviews in **The American Animated Cartoon: A Critical Anthology** edited by Geral Peary & Danny Peary (E.P. Dutton—1980). I highly recommend it as an important book on your animation shelf.)

But what does all this have to do with the title of the article? Well, after Idi Amin fled Uganda for parts unknown, his palace was ransacked, and found in a closet there were reel after reel after reel... of Tom and Jerry cartoons.

It tends to give one pause to consider.

NOTES

THE TRIUMPH OF COMIC FANDOM

By Sam Kujava

You are ably employed by a major New York based comic magazine publishing company.

Of the many titles published by this company, three are your responsibility. These titles account for thousands of dollars in sales. The characters featured in these comics are heavily merchandised by toy and clothing manufacturers. They also have tie-ins with other media, including a Saturday morning cartoon series and an upcoming feature film. These characters in these comics are worth a **lot** of money to your company.

You have to select a writer who can deliver a script each and every month. You have to find an artist who can draw 20 pages every month. You have to have an inker who can work fast, because the penciller is sometimes late.

All of this work has to cross your desk on certain set days, so that you can pass the work on to the production department, where the pages can be lettered, corrected and colored.

You must make sure that these important deadlines are met, because press time has been set aside for the printing of your comics. Distributors are waiting to deliver the packaged books to various sales outlets throughout the country.

You sit squarely in the middle of creative, freelance types and harried, the-last-to-know production people. You're a funnel, a coordinator, a guy with a chair and a whip.

You're an editor.

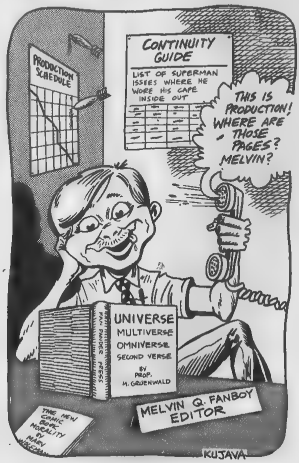
***

The popular image of an editor is the city newspaper stereotype seen in hundreds of movies and TV shows. He's gruff, middle-aged, smokes a cigar which never leaves his mouth. He manages to talk through it though, as he yells constantly at reporters to hurry up and finish their stories. He smokes, drinks and eats too much because the job is hard and it never gets easier. He's caught between a rock and a hard place.

But when the day is done and the paper is put to bed, he does manage a smile for a young reporter who did a damn fine job. The next day it starts all over.

Comic book editors have traditionally adhered to the popular image. When comic books were a new thing in the Thirties and Forties, professional people who could run the booming operation were brought in from other publishing areas. Some of them had editorial experience from newspapers and pulp magazines.

People like Jack Schiff, Murray Boltinoff, Julius Schwartz and Mort Weisinger had solid foundations on which to start. Comics were a different kind of animal, and adapting was necessary. It wasn't long until they mastered the new medium and produced good selling titles for their publishers, sometimes for a period of ten, twenty, thirty years. These editors, and many others like them, saw that the material presented in these comics was in good taste, because they knew their audience,



and their audience was mainly children. They tried as much as possible to work with writers and artists who were dependable, that could make the deadlines. In the event that an artist or writer fell behind, or got drunk and disappeared, the editor worked a lot harder to get everything on his desk in time. The deadline didn't change.

He would send the original art off to production after it had been fully proofread, and all mistakes were noted in blue pencil for correction by a paste-up man. After the pages had been colored he would yet again look over the work, making sure that all the major characters were wearing the same colored suits from panel to panel.

Even after the book had been sent off for printing and distribution, the editor was still at his desk after hours. A freelance writer was behind in his rent and needed an advance on his next story. The editor would have to get on the line with the business department and have a check messenger-delivered to the guy as soon as possible. The phone would ring and the inker would plead for an extension. The regular penciller has sprained his drawing wrist and a frantic search was necessary to find an artist who could pinch hit and do the job over the weekend.

For as much time as your old-fashioned typical editor spent with these comics, from creation to execution, he was able to distance himself from the subject matter at hand. He did the best job possible for himself and for the audience out there.

He did **not** follow comic books regularly, those his company produced or those of his competitors. The entertainment of the day...good books, great music and movies...attracted the attention of the editor.

That kind of editor had his day in the tumultuous industry. The day was long, hard and ultimately satisfying.

Then came...the fans.

***

Before the fans, the editors operated in a kind of vacuum. Feedback was low. Sales figures told what was selling, what was not. An occasional letter or three was sent by readers, thanking unnamed parties for making such a great comic, but critical points could hardly be gleaned from such missives.

Two or so decades ago, editors discovered fans. They weren't the typical little kid reader, but seemingly an older, more intelligent reader that followed most of the titles, knew the characters as well or better than the editor and were possessed of such enthusiasm that they published their own amateur 'fan-zines' extolling the virtues of their chosen hobby.

Julius Schwartz, an editor for DC/National, acknowledged these fans in the letter columns of his comic books. The fans, a vocal minority, soon changed the tone and level of discussion of these lettercols. The editor and his readers would now discuss scientific aspects of past stories, as well as the secret identity and social problems of their various super characters.

Schwartz continued to produce the same quality material, issue after issue, month after month. The fan element was restricted to the letters pages.

Over at Marvel comics, an editor named Stan Lee also acknowledged the fans. Lee had started in the business as a teenager and had grown up with the industry. Now the editor of a line of titles, Lee was middle-aged, bored and looking to inject more fun into his job. The idea that there were older, intelligent readers who enjoyed his books was good for his ego.

Lee cajoled and courted his fans, giving them lavish space on the letters pages, and letting them in on the goings-on at Marvel Comics. A special page, the Marvel Bullpen Bulletins page, was initiated seperately from the lettercol, so Stan could yak at length about which artist was acting up in the office last week, or how Spidey and Hulk were catching on with kids on college campuses all over the country. He adopted a youthful, hip jargon for communicating with his fans. It was ultimately corny in retrospect...a middle-aged man talking like a teenager, but it was also very clannish. Fans were onto something special and here was a guy who was kind of like one of them. Stan's stories began to reflect his involvement and interest with fans. In jokes and knowing winks, and a sense of we're-just-having-fun-here were no longer the domain of the lettercols.

Lee still produced comics for a wide audience but for the first time comics were also done with a select group in mind.

Marvel, the upstart, eventually overtook DC, the leader, in sales. For years fans and pros alike debated the reasons for this occurance. Lee had at least a superficial grasp of the changing times of the Sixties. His Marvel superhero comics were a sometimes shallow reflection of the uncertainty felt by the youth over a change of values and basic beliefs. For a new generation of buyers looking for things new and different, Marvel fit that bill. Marvel Comics were embraced by a whole new kind of audience that also made rock-and-roll music

and middle class drug use a big business in America.

Somehow, **fans**, that vocal, literary minority, claimed victory about this time. Comics had changed more in a few years than they had in the previous thirty years. Comics were more hip, grown up, cynical...just like the fans. They felt that comic books were now theirs, part and parcel of their clannish bunch and published for **their** entertainment and erudition. Comic books which were still published for a vast audience were labeled 'kid stuff' and 'juvenile'. Imagine, comic books for kids! What a quaint idea! The editors and artists and writers of these damned titles were labeled 'old fogies' and their smiling heroes and optimistic storylines 'outdated'.

But the best news was yet to come. More than ever, the fans were not remaining on the fringe. As the old order died out, retired or were pushed out, the only warm bodies available and willing to enter a sick publishing industry were the fans. Yes, after the boom of the Sixties, when any silly thing from Nehru jackets to miniskirts to spy movies to Marvel Comics sold because it was new and different, the bottom fell out of the good times. Sales plummeted, the old order was blamed and the example of a still reasonably successful Marvel Comics was noted. The relationship between the industry and its fans was beyond the courting stage. They went to bed together. Fans entering the hallowed halls of DC and Marvel, intent on producing new and exciting kinds of comics, that they were sure their fan pals would just love. The ship was sinking and the rats were at the pilot.

***

The old editors had brought a world of experience and a wide range of interests to their jobs. They read the great authors, saw the best of American movies, expanded their minds with inventive radio drama and stayed in touch with the ever changing global events that were altering the world they grew up in. They were a product of their times, when the arts flourished and blossomed in all areas.

The fan editors brought their rather limited, snobbish world-view to their jobs. They read mostly comics and then only the comics that were 'right' for them. Maybe a little science fiction...that was related to comic books, somewhat. They watched bad television programs that existed only to sell soap and underarm deodorant. They associated only with other fans that liked the same things they did. Non-members of their exclusive club, the work-a-day world, did not interest them. They read, watched and listened to what appealed only to them. Open-mindedness and well-roundedness were not in the province of these brave, new editors.

Whoever now sat in the editor's chair, the deadlines and responsibilities remained as pressing as ever. Writers and artists still have to have their work in on a certain date. Production still needed the work for lettering and correction and coloring. The press time was still set aside, expensive time that the companies did not want to pay penalties on for missed deadlines. The comic still had to be manufactured and the responsibility was still the editor's.

As the fans infiltrate the industry even more in the 1980s, one is hard pressed to find a good comic book. One that tells a story, has a beginning, middle and end, recognizable good and bad guys and simple, strong writing and drawing. There are still a few good comics left, because there are still a few good editors left. When they die, retire, or are forced out the fans will move in and reshape those books in their own image.

Have you read any good books lately?

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BY BRIAN BOLLAND AND JOHN WAGNER

32 PAGES-FOUR COLOR-MONTHLY-$1-MANDO PAPER

Comics Consumer Guide

MARVEL

☐Titles shipping November 1, on sale November 22:

☐**The Thing #9** - Written by John Byrne, penciled by Ron Wilson and inked by Hilary Barta.

☐ **Daredevil 204**—Crossbow. His very name means death for whatever crosses his path. Plus a guest appearance by Tony Stark! Written by Denny O'Neil, penciled by Luke McDonnell.

☐ **New Mutants 13**—A New Mutant is welcomed to the ranks. Written by Chris Claremont, penciled by Sal Buscema and inked by Tom Mandrake.

☐ **Dazzler 31**—Written by Jim Shooter, penciled by Frank Springer and inked by Vince Colletta.

☐ **Conan The King 21**—(Formerly titled **King Conan**) in the aftermath of the Death of Prince Conn. Written by Alan Zelenetz, penciled by Marc Silvestri and cover by Michael Kaluta.

☐ **Hercules (Limited Series) 2**—Can Hercules prevent the murder of his Skrull friend Skyppi? Red Wolf is penciled, written and inked by Bob Layton.

☐ **The Official Handbook Of The Marvel Universe 14**—Part II of "The Book of The Dead".

☐ **Tarzan Of The Apes—Marvel Super Special 29**—The origin of Lord Greystoke. Mark Evanier writer and Dan Speigel artist. [Baxter paper]

☐Titles shipping November 8, on sale November 29:

☐ **Amazing Spider-Man 250**—Written by Roger Stern, penciled by John Romita Jr and inked by Klaus Janson.

☐ **Captain America 291**—"An American Christmas" is written by J.M. DeMatteis and penciled by Paul Neary!

☐ **Thor 341**—Written, penciled and inked by Walt Simonson!

☐ **Indiana Jones 15**—Captain Simon Katanga and the Bantu Wind are back. Written by David Michelinie.

☐ **Savage Sword of Conan 97**—Conan is after "The Blood Ruby of Death". Script by Michael Reisher, pencils by John Buscema.

☐ **Moon Knight 36**—Guest-starring Dr. Strange. Written by Alan Zelenetz, pencils by Bo Hampton. Direct sales only.

☐ **Micronauts 57**—Double-size issue. Available at newsstands as well as Direct Sales outlets for this month only. "The Land of Never Summer". Bill Mantlo script, Butch Guice pencils and Kelly Jones inks. Special Bonus: an eight-page supplement revealing the full workings inside the Bioship.

☐ **Crystar 6**—Nightcrawler of the X-Men guest-stars. Written by Jo Duffy, penciled by Ricardo Villamonte and inked by Dave Simons.

☐ **Magik (Limited Series) 4**—Storm dies - Cat dies - everybody dies except Belasco, the Demons and Illyana. Writer Chris Claremont, penciler Ron Frenz and inker Tom Palmer.

☐ Titles shipping November 15, on sale December 6:

☐ **Incredible Hulk 293**—Bill Mantlo writer, Sal Buscema penciler and Gerry Talqoc inks.

☐ **Avengers 241**—Guest-starring Dr. Strange and Henry Pym. Still searching for the spirit of Spider-Woman, Dr. Strange sends the Avengers off to an astral dimension. Roger Stern writer, Al Milgrom penciler and Joe Sinnott inker.

☐ **Conan The Barbarian 156**—Penciled by John Buscema, script by Michael Reisher and inked by Ernie Chan.

☐ **Marvel Tales 181**—Reprinting "The Goblin and the Gangsters" from the classic **Spider-Man 23.**

☐ **X-Men 179**—Chris Claremont, John Romita Jr and Terry Austin write, pencil and ink it.

☐ **Rom 52**—"Total War!" Written by Bill Mantlo and penciled by Sal Buscema.

☐ **Power Man And Iron Fist 103**—Archie Goodwin wrote it, Greg LaRocque penciled it.

☐ **G.I. Joe 21**—Larry Hama wrote and penciled.

☐ **Elektra Saga 3**—Re-telling of the Elektra saga combined with all-new artwork from Frank Miller. (Baxter paper, Direct Sales only.)

☐ **Marvel Fanfare 13**—"The Widow Alone!" Written by Ralph Macchio and penciled by George Perez. (Direct Sales only, Hudson)

☐ **Marvel Age Magazine 12**

☐ **Epic Illustrated 22**

☐ Titles shipping November 22, on sale December 13:

☐ **Fantastic Four 284**—Written, penciled and inked by John Byrne!

☐ **Marvel Team-up 139**—Nick Fury, agent of SHIELD can handle just about anything but when the Maggia kidnaps his old Howling Commando buddy Dino Minelli's girlfriend your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man helps out. Cary Burkett wrote, Brian Postman penciled and Mike Esposito inked.

☐ **Iron Man 180**—Written by Denny O'Neil, penciled by Luke McDonnell and inked by Steve Mitchell.

☐ **Peter Parker, The Spectacular Spider-Man 88**—While the Black Cat makes the most important decision of her career, Mr. Hyde is out for revenge against Cobra. Written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Al Milgrom and inked by Jim Mooney.

☐ **Defenders 128**—The New Defenders must battle The New Mutants. Written by J.M. DeMatteis, penciled by Ron Frenz and inked by Kim DeMulder.

☐ **Star Wars 81**—Written by Jo Duffy, penciled by Ron Frenz and inked by Tom Palmer.

☐ **Alpha Flight 8**—"Deadly Ernest" and "Aurora" both stories written penciled and inked by John Byrne.

☐ **Dreadstar 8**—Written and drawn by Jim Starlin (Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Jack Of Hearts (Limited Series) 3**—Written by Bill Mantlo, pencils and inks by George Freeman.

☐ **Micronauts Special Edition 4**—(Hudson paper) **Micronauts 9** is written by Bill Mantlo, penciled by Michael Golden and inked by Al Milgrom. "Defeat" from **Micronauts 10** is by the same team. Cover by Butch Guice.

Last Minute Additions:

☐ **Spider-Man And Daredevil 1**—Reprinting 27 and 28. (Hudson paper, Direct Sales only)

☐ **Doctor Strange Special Edition 1**—Re-presenting the early Lee/Ditko Dr. Strange stories. (Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Captain America Special Edition 1**—(Hudson stock) Issue 1 reprints "No Longer Alone" from **Captain America 110** and "Tomorrow You Live, Tonight I Die" from **Captain America 111.** Both by Stan Lee, Jim Steranko and inked by Joe Sinnott.

☐ **Marvel Graphic Novel 8—The Futurians**— Dave Cockrum. $6.95. 72 pages. (Direct Sales Only)

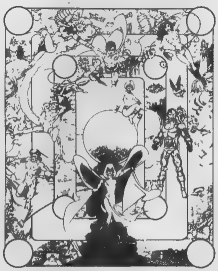
☐ **Shipping the week of November 8, on sale December 1:**

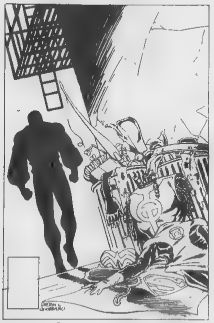
☐ **Warlords Graphic Novel 2**—Story by Steve Skeates, art by David Wenzel. (Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Shipping the week of November 15th, on sale December 1:**

☐ **The New Teen Titans Collectors' Poster**—Pencilled and inked by George Perez. (Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Justice League Of America 224**—Story by Kurt Busiek, pencils by Chuck Patton and inks by Romeo Tanghal. Introducing a new villain: Paragon.





☐ **Wonder Woman 313**—Script by Dan Mishkin and art by Don Heck.

☐ **Blackhawk 268**—Story by Mark Evanier and art by Dan Spiegle.

☐ **DC Comics Presents 67**—Story by E. Nelson Bridwell and Len Wein and pencils by Curt Swan. Superman and Santa Claus.

☐ **The Fury Of Firestorm 22**

☐ **Amethyst 11**—Story by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn and art by Ernie Colon. Cover by George Perez and Ernie Colon. Shifting alliances, betrayal and battle befall Amethyst as she leads the assault against Fortress Opel.

☐ **The Best of DC Digest 46**—Featuring stories of Jimmy Olsen.

☐ **Atari Force 3**—Story by Gerry Conway, pencils by Jose Luis Garcia Lopez and inks by Ricardo Villagran.

☐ **Vigilante 4**—Story by Marv Wolfman, art by Keith Pollard and Pablo Marcos. Adrian Chase takes on The Exterminator. (Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Shipping the week of November 22, on sale December 15:**

☐ **Arak, Son of Thunder 31**—Story by Roy and Dann Thomas with art by Ernie Colon.

☐ **Batman 369**—Story by Doug Moench, pencils by Don Newton and inks by Alfredo Alcala.

☐ **The Flash 331**—Story by Cary Bates and Joey Cavalieri, pencils by Carmine Infantino and inks by Frank McLaughlin. Cover penciled by Carmine Infantino.

☐ **G.I. Combat 263**—The third part of the Mercenaries series.

☐ **Superman 393**—Story by Bob Rozakis and Joe Cavalieri, pencils by Irv Novick, cover pencils by Ed Hannigan. "The Day They Nuked Superman." An atomic explosion that duplicates the destruction of the planet Krypton. It's purpose—to turn the Man of Steel's uniform into deadly green kryptonite.

☐ **The New Teen Titans 40**—Story by Marv Wolfman, pencils by George Perez, inks by Romeo Tanghal.

☐ **Star Trek 4**

☐ **The Omega Men 12**—Script by Roger Slifer, pencils by Tod Smith and inking by Mike De Carlo. (Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Nathaniel Dusk Mini-Series 2**—Script by Don McGregor, art and cover by Gene Colan.. Dusk must find out the secret she kept from him at the cost of her life. (Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Green Lantern/Green Arrow 6**—Reprinted classics (Baxter paper, Direct Sales Only)

☐ **Shipping the week of November 29, on sale December 22:**

☐ **Saga of the Swamp Thing 22**

☐ **Batman and the Outsiders 8**—Story by Mike W. Barr, art and cover by Jim Aparo. Kidnappings taking place the week before Christmas.

☐ **Green Lantern 174**—Story by Len Wein and art by Dave Gibbons.

☐ **Sgt. Rock 386**—Story by Robert Kanigher and art by Frank Redondo.

☐ **The Legion of Super-Heroes 309**—Story by Paul Levitz, pencils by Keith Giffen and inks by Larry Mahlstedt. Cover by Keith Giffen and Larry Mahlstedt.

☐ **Supergirl 17**—Story by Paul Kupperberg and art by Carmine Infantino and Bob Oksner.

☐ **Superman Special 2**—Story by Cary Bates with art and cover by Gil Kane. The 45th anniversary of **Action Comics** revealed how Brainiac escaped imprisonment within a world of his own creation and how that escape changed him into the new Brainiac. But suppose he had used a different method that didn't alter his appearance? That's the question posed and answered in this, the first imaginary story of Superman to be published in several years.

☐ **Warlord 79**—Story by Cary Burkett, pencils by Pat Broderick, inks by Dan Adkins.

☐ **Thriller 5**—Script by Robert Loren Fleming and art and cover by Trevor Von Eeden. Introducing a quick-shootin', music-makin' felon wearing blue suede shoes! (Baxter Paper, Direct Sales only)

☐ **Infinity Inc 1**—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Mike Machlan and inks by Jerry Ordway. The membership: Brainwave Jr, Fury, Silver Scarab, Jade, Obsidian, Nuklon, Power Girl, The Huntress, The Star

Spangled Kid and more. The Earth-2 super-heroes of the 1980s.

☐ **New Talent Showcase 3**—No information available at presstime. (Direct Sales Only)

☐ Shipping the week of December 6, on sale December 29th:

☐ **Action Comics 553**—Story by Marv Wolfman, art and cover by Gil Kane. With Cave Carson, Rip Hunter, Dane Dorrance of the Sea Devils, Rick Flag of the Suicide Squad, Animal Man, Congo Bill, Dolphin and Immortal Man.

☐ **Detective 536**—Batman story by Doug Moench, pencils by Gene Colan and inks by Bob Smith. The Green Arrow second story is written by Joey Cavalieri and drawn by Chuck Patton.

☐ **Johan Hex 82**—Story by Michael Reisher, art by Dick Ayers and Tony De Zuniga.

☐ **World's Finest Comics 301**—No information available at presstime.

☐ **All Star Squadron 31**—Story by Roy Thomas, pencils by Rick Hoberg. Over 40 guest stars!

☐ **Arion, Lord of Atlantis 17**—No information at presstime.

☐ **The New Adventures of Superboy 51**—Story by Bob Rozakis, pencils by Curt Swan and Kurt Scheffenberger, inks by Joe Giella and Frank Chiaramonte.

☐ **The Redeemer 3**—Written and drawn by Joe Kubert. (Direct Sales Only, Baxter Paper)

☐ **Ronin, Book V**—Written and drawn by Frank Miller. (Direct Sales Only, Baxter Paper)

☐ **Camelot 3000 12**—The conclusion. Story by Mike W. Barr pencils by Brian Bolland inks by Terry Austin. (Direct Sales Only, Baxter Paper)

Archie

OCTOBER

☐ **Little Archie 534**

☐ **Archie's Christmas Stocking 535**

☐ **Betty & Veronica Christmas Spectacular 536**

☐ **Archie 337**

☐ **Pep 392**

☐ **Life with Archie 240**

☐ **Betty & Me 137**

☐ **Everything's Archie 109**

☐ **Laugh Comics Digest 50**

☐ **Jughead with Archie Comics Digest 80**

☐ **Archie's Double Digest 9**

September

☐ **Betty & Veronica 327**—Betty and Veronica face "Peer Pressure", do they give in?

☐ **Jughead 331**—Big Ethel is alive and well, appearing in "The Dream". Written by George Gladir and drawn by Sam Schwartz.

☐ **Laugh 350**

☐ **Archie at Riverdale High 94**

☐ **Archie & Me 142**—Written and drawn by Bob Bolling!

☐ **Archie's T.V. Laughout 92**—The Z-Team is here.

☐ **Archie Comics Digest 63**

☐ **Jughead Jones Digest 27**

☐ **Where are you Digest 29**

The following are direct sales only

AC

☐ **Black Diamond 4**

☐ **Nightveil 1**

CAPITAL Publications Inc.

☐ **Whisper 1**—Cover by Michael Golden. Script by Steven Grant and Rich Larson, inks by Dennis Wolf and colors by Les Dorscheid. (Baxter Paper)

☐ **Nexus 5**—Story by Mike Baron art by Steve Rude and colors by Les Dorscheid. (Baxter Paper)

☐ **The Badger 3**—Cover by Rude and Butler. Stories by Mike Baron, art by Rick Burchett and Jeff Butler and colors by Les Dorscheid. (Baxter Paper)

Comico

☐ **AZ 4**

☐ **Slaughterhouse 4**

☐ **Grendel 5**

☐ **Evangeline 1**

EAGLE COMICS

☐ **Judge Dredd 4**

ECLIPSE COMICS

☐ **Sabre 7**

☐ **Dragonta 8**

☐ **Eclipse 5**

☐ **Ms. Tree 6**

☐ **Coyote Graphic Album 1**

FIRST COMICS

☐ **Shipping the Second Tuesday in November:**

☐ **American Flagg 6**—Cover by Howard Chaykin. "Southern Comfort, Conclusion" written, pencilled and inked by Howard Chaykin.

☐ **Jon Sable Freelance 10**—Cover by Mike Grell "Triptych" written, pencilled and inked by Mike Grell.

☐ **Shipping the Third Tuesday in November:**

☐ **Warp 11**—Cover by Jerry Bingham and Mike Gustovich. "Diversions" by Peter Gillis, Jerry Bingham and Mike Gustovich. Outrider "You Can't Go Home Again" by Gillis and Lenin Delsol.

☐ **Mars 3**—Cover by Wheatley and Hempel. "Transformer" by Mark Wheatley and Marc Hempel. Black Flame: "The Hellequin Ride!" by Peter Gillis, Tom Sutton and Bruce Patterson.

☐ **Shipping the Fourth Tuesday in November:**

☐ **E-Man 12**—Cover by Joe Staton. "Sewer of Doom!" by Joe Staton and Rich Burchett. Plus Michael Mauser's Crimestompers Textbook.

☐ **Starslayer 14**—Cover by Timothy Truman. "Stand!" by John Ostrander and Timothy Truman. Grimjack: "Buried Past, Part 3" by Ostrander and Truman.

☐ **Elric of Melnibone 5**—By Roy Thomas, P. Craig Russell and Michael T. Gilbert. (Baxter paper)

☐ **Alien Worlds 6**—Written and edited by Bruce Jones, co-editor April Campbell. (Baxter paper)

☐ **Groo 7**—By Sergio Aragones. (Baxter paper)

Quest

☐ **Lance Corrigan 3**

RED CIRCLE COMICS GROUP

☐ **Black Hood 4**—Infantino and Alex Nino. "Face Behind The Mask" by Dave Alikis. The **original** Black Hood returns. Also: "Phantom Patrol" by Dubay and Margo Poulis.

THE SPIRIT

☐ **Spirit Color Comic 1**

SPECTRUM

Shipping Date November 16

☐ **The Survivors 4**

Shipping Date November 21

☐ **The Guardian 1**

VORTEX

☐ **Vortex 5**

☐ **Mr. X 2**

☐ **Blue Ribbon 5 & 6**—The Fox in all new solo adventures by Rich Buckler and Stan Timmons, art by Tony Dezuniga, Dick Ayers and Villagran. The Fox versus Martial Law and The Eraser. (Baxter Paper)

☐ **Comet 3**—Bill Dubey, Carmine Infantino and Alex Nino. Comet tries to prevent genocide in a foreign country. Cover by Infantino.

☐ **The Fly 5**—By Steve Ditko. All his life, his burning ambition has been to see justice done. Now he is losing the most important case of his life: He stands before the Ethics board; his fiancee has left him; his law partner has turned against him; his best friend, D.A. Richard Busse, has sworn to get him disbarred. Thomas Troy is caught in the maddening mystery of "X, Y, Z!" Plus The Jaguar, by Ward and Vicatan.

Publishers Picks

Choice morsels. The best the four-color medium has to offer, at least in your author's humble opinion, will be selected and presented here for your inspection every issue. Every two months I will go over to my shelf and select the items that I, personally as I pretend no special yardstick or system of standards and I most certainly am not looking for those of "artistic" merit, enjoyed especially. And these can be anything from a comic book to a graphic magazine to an illustrated novel, anything which will be of interest to devotees of comic storytelling. And I should also point out at this point that I am very heavily prejudiced towards those that tell a story well not to those that merely look pretty. On occasion I will bend the rules and point out an older story or book that I happen to have just reread and feel worthy of special attention. Yes, this column is VERY self-indulgent. You see, I can afford to do that, as I am the publisher.

Why should you read the column? Try a few and you may decide that I have good taste or you may decide that my tastes are weird enough to prove interesting and in either case you will find something of value. You may decide to try some of those items which I found especially interesting — or you may decide to buy only those that I do not like as tastes differ radically. Mercifully, it will be a short column.

Thor #337 This is the first of the issues pencilled and scripted by Walt Simonson and he is doing something worthy of attention. Once upon a time **Thor** was one of my favorite books and one of a very few heroes that Marvel felt worthy of having its own title on a monthly basis. Those were the days when the magazine had a feeling of grandeur and was filled with the pomp and circumstance of Asgardian regalia. Simonson is clearly trying to return this feel to a long-dull book. Whether he will succeed beginning with the very odd storyline showcasing Beta Ray Bill remains to be seen.

Flash 327 Another traditionally boring book seems to be enjoying something of a revival as this storyline begins to heat up. Flash has killed Reverse Flash and is now beginning to face the consequences. The latest issue ends on a cliff-hanger as Superman is about to break the deadlock of whether our speedy hero should be kicked out of the Justice League.

Ms. Tree #3 Ms. Tree is of interest for three reasons: IT IS NOT A SUPERHERO BOOK BUT A REASONABLY WELL—TOLD DETECTIVE SERIES, Max Allan Collins is an excellent writer of mysteries and Terry Beatty is trying very hard to create a different artistic atmosphere.

Nexus #3 Nexus is one of the best comics being done today. The texture of the book is excellent and perhaps the best combination of superheroics and science fiction concepts comics anywhere. Mike Baron and Steve Rude are willing to take a chance [they have little to lose being previously unknown to comic book circles anyway] and the publisher seems equally willing to try anything if it seems of quality [and they do have something to lose] but fortunately the gamble seems to be paying off in very high calibre material.

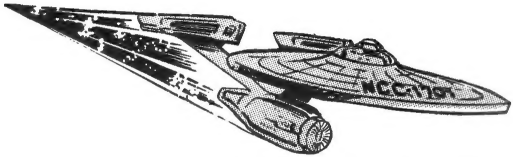
Judge Dredd #1 This is a reprint of material which previously appeared in blace-and-white in **2000 AD**, a weekly comic published in England. Here the material is very well colored and even more interesting than before. Very violent but very good.

Jon Sable #6 Sable is the forerunner of a new trend, mercenary comics. It is a refreshing break from the normal run-of-the-mill story and quite worth the reading. Marv Wolfman, the writer of the **Teen Titans** and **Vigalante**, considers this one of the best comics being done today. He's not far wrong.

Kelly Green This one is a graphic novel released both here and in France by Dargaud. The material is drawn by Stan Drake of Juliet Jones fame and written by Leonard Starr, the creator of On Stage and the current artist/writer of Annie. The two are every inch the professional and it shows. If you like your detective stories hard bitten and semi-realistic this is for you. If you insist on complete accuracy forget it. Just as with **Ms. Tree** The protagonist is a woman and the supporting cast is interesting.

DC Presents #63 Amethyst, Princess of Gem World, is nothing short of a fairy tale in comic book form and Superman is the leading superhero character of all time. The two types of story should not mix well and yet here they do. Somehow Superman's normally ridiculous superheroics here appear more believable in the fairy tale atmosphere and the Gem World focus seems better than ever. A very good story by Dan Mishkin and Gary Cohn with key parts inked by Ernie Colon giving more vitality to usually boring Alex Saviuk pencils.

The Uncanny X-Men #174-175 This is the most popular comic book of our time and unfortunately doesn't always deserve to be. This issue though shows the great potential of the writing talent possessed by Chris Claremont [talent which also emerged to the surface in the recent X-Men Graphic Novel] and was an excellent finale to the stint on the book by Paul Smith. The story builds real suspense and carefully leads to a very logical and well-paced ending.



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The only national magazine based in the heart of the movie industry, Southern California, *Enterprise Incidents* always has access to the personalities and artists responsible for films we all enjoy—movies such as *Star Trek, Spacehunter, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Star Wars* and many others. Recent interviews with Andrew Probert, James Doohan, Ray Bradbury, Leonard Nimoy, Greg Jein and Nicholas Meyer are only the tip of the iceberg. Color sections featuring never before seen photography from *Return of the Jedi*, the visual effects of *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* and the construction of the shuttlecraft Galileo are only a few more examples of the many wonders contained within the pages of this exciting magazine.

Enterprise Incidents is written by fans for fans. It goes out of its way to find features that no one else is doing and that the editors want very much to see themselves and share with you. They love science fiction and their enthusiasm shows because they want to be just as excited by each issue as the reader, and they're mighty tough to please!

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- Marvel & DC Present
- Marvel Age (News!)
- Marvel Fanfare
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- Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe
- Peter Parker
- Powerman & Iron Fist
- Rom
- Star Wars
- The Thing
- Thor
- U.S. 1
- What If . . . ?
- X-Men
- Any Limited Series
- Any One-shot
- Any Marvel #1
- Any Marvel #1 (No reprints)
- All Marvel Annuals
- Any "Baxter" reprints
- Selected Marvel Annuals

EPIC COMICS
- Coyote
- Dreadstar
- Any Epic #1

MARVEL MAGAZINES
- Epic Illustrated
- Marvel Graphic Novel
- Marvel Super Special
- Savage Sword

DC COMICS
- Action
- All-Star Squadron
- Amethyst, Princess of Gem World
- Arak
- Arion
- Atari Force
- Batman
- Batman & The Outsiders
- Blackhawk
- Blue Devil
- Camelot 3000
- Captain Carrot
- DC Comics Presents
- Detective
- Flash
- Fury of Firestorm
- G.I. Combat
- Green Lantern
- House of Mystery
- Jonah Hex
- Justice League
- Legion of Superheroes
- New Talent Showcase
- New Teen Titans
- Night Force
- Omega Men
- Ronin (Frank Miller)
- Saga of Swamp Thing
- Sgt. Rock
- Superboy
- Supergirl
- Superman
- Vigilante
- Warlord

DC COMICS
- Wonder Woman
- World's Finest
- Zero Man
- Adventure Digest
- Best of DC Digest
- Any DC #1
- Any DC #1 (No reprints)
- Any DC Maxi-series
- Any DC Mini-series
- All DC Annuals
- Selected DC Annuals
- Any DC Insert Comic
- Any DC One-shot
- Any DC Graphic Novel

FIRST COMICS
- American Flagg
- E-Man
- Mars
- Jon Sable: Freelance
- Starslayer
- Warp
- Warp Special
- Any First Comics #1

PACIFIC COMICS
- Alien Worlds
- Berni Wrightson (Master of the Macabre)
- Captain Victory
- Edge of Chaos
- Elric of Melnibone
- Groo, the Wanderer
- Ms. Mystic
- Pacific Presents
- Quest and Other Tales
- Silver Star
- Somerset Holmes
- Twisted Tales
- World of Wood
- Any Pacific One-shot
- Any Pacific #1

RED CIRCLE
- Black Hood
- Blue Ribbon
- Comet
- Fly

RED CIRCLE
- Galaxia (Magazine)
- Hang Man
- Jaguar
- Mighty Crusaders
- Shield
- Thunder Bunny
- Any Red Circle #1
- Any Red Circle Mini-series

IMPORTS
- Dr. Who Monthly (Marvel U.K.)
- Cinema (Marvel U.K.)
- Dan Dare (Dragon's Dream)
- Starburst (Marvel U.K.)
- Warrior (Quality)

TITAN BOOKS, LTD.
- A B C Warriors
- Charley's War
- Comic Tales (color)
- Garth
- Jeff Hawke
- Judge Dredd
- Nemesis

SPECIAL EFFECTS MAGAZINES
- American Cinematographer
- American Fantasy
- Cinefantastique
- Cinefex
- Cinemagic
- Fangoria
- Fantastic Films
- Starlog
- Starlog Guidebooks

ARCHIE COMICS
- If All

WHITMAN COMICS
- If all

ALTERNATIVE COMICS
- Az (Comico)
- Badger, The (Capital Publ.)

ALTERNATIVE COMICS
- Basically Strange
- Cerebus
- Comico Primer
- D'Arc Tangent
- Domino Chance
- Elfquest
- First Kingdom
- Vortex
- Gates of Eden (Fantaco)
- Grendel (Comico)
- Hall of Fame (John C. Publ.)
- Hembeck (Fantaco)
- Hugo
- Journey (A. Vanaheim)
- Justice Machine (Noble)
- Ken Pierce Reprint Series
- Love & Rockets
- Masterworks Series
- Neil the Horse (A. Vanaheim)
- Nemo (Classic Comics Library)
- Nexus (Capital Publ.)
- Pogo: The Okeefenokee Star
- Skrog (Comico)
- Slaughterman (Comico)
- Southern Knights (formerly, The Crusaders)
- Spirit (Krupp)
- Star Fighters
- Star Rider & The Peace Machine
- Steve Canyon (Krupp)
- Survivors (Spectrum)
- Swords of Cerebus
- Thunder Agents (John C. Publ.)
- Voyages (Nautilus Dreams)
- Whisper (Capital Publ.)

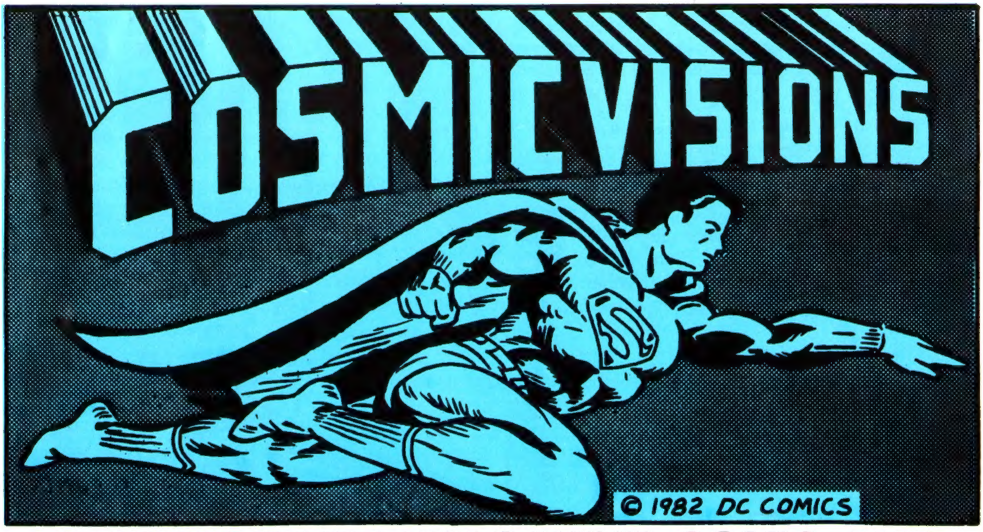
ECLIPSE COMICS
- Aztec Ace
- Destroyer Duck
- DNAgents
- Eclipse
- "Hall of Fame Series"

ECLIPSE COMICS
- John Law (W. Eisner)
- Ms. Tree
- Sabre
- Scorpio Rose
- Any Eclipse #1

AMERICOMICS
- Americomics
- Americomics Special
- Black Diamond
- Bolt & Star Force 6
- Fun Comics
- Sentinels of Justice
- Any Americomics #1

EAGLE COMICS
- Judge Dredd (color)

FAN MAGAZINES
- Amazing Heroes
- Bondage (James Bond)
- Comic Book Price Guide Update #2
- Comic Fandom's Forum
- Comic Informer
- Comic News
- Comic Reader
- Comics Collector
- Comics Feature
- Comics Interview
- Comics Journal
- Comics Scene
- Enterprise Incidents
- Fanfare
- Fantaco Chronicles Series
- Fantastic Exploits
- Fantasy Book (SF)
- Fantasy Empire
- Fantasy Images
- Golden Age of Comics
- Marvel Comics Index
- Panels
- Prevue
- RBCC
- Rigel (SF)
- Rising Star
- Video Gaming Illustrated
- Comic Book Price Guide #13



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